

Lateral



fist and kiss theory
academic margins
reclaimed spaces respect autonomy
General Assemb search
history of computing gender norms
feminist performance
analog identity



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Lateral II

Lateral is back. A pleasure to return, and a return on pleasure. We hope. We began with many promises. To craft a publishing currency that would be timeful, attendant to the spaces that thought might occupy, bearing a value as to how knowledge in all its materiality might accrue against the dulling algorithms of excellence sorted by rank. A lot to ask for, and there is much uncertainty between making a mark and leaving a marker. Our aim continues to be to expand these spaces in between, to open laterally the affinities and affiliations by which cultural studies moves and makes a difference in its worlds. Cultural studies, without doubt, has been long on promise, and with promise comes the prospect of disappointment. But this history is also the engagement with the evaluative criteria by which we would know we were getting more of what we wanted, and therefore a pursuit of the efficacies of combating various regimes of measure. Our promise has been as much to re-figure the means by which publication opens a social imaginary, a making public that makes publics, but of energizing the ways in which those with a commitment to cultural studies in all its guises might associate. Lateral is far from being an organ, a pound of flesh or a back bone of the Cultural Studies Association, but it remains an opening through which those various circulations might flow. How we might achieve this is a question we hope to engage in the entangled seriality of this second issue with this eleventh gathering of our association—and with what comes next. Please join us.

Lateral II is also, like the first, a braiding of research threads. This time we offer a triple helix. The Cultural Industries thread, curated by Jaafar Aksikas, presents a conversation between two nodes of cultural studies that move in and outside the academy Ien Ang's Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney, and the Cultural Studies Praxis Collective at the University of Washington. This intersectoral work hints at an alter-economy, what it terms a negotiation with partners for critical purchase that complicates the reductive rubrics of neoliberal exchange. The Theory Thread, curated by Patricia Clough features a dossier on digital feminism assembled by Katherine Behar. This too is an effort to find value beyond measure, but also to refuse the algorithms of success, to assert the ungoogleable, the necessary failure, in pursuit of an anti-search engine that might power other reservoirs of thought. The Universities in Question Thread, is curated by student activists Megan Turner and Niall Twohig, and art from the smARTaction collective curated by Tina Orlandini. This dossier of manifestos and art works from various university mobilizations and occupations from Quebec, Cairo, Occupy Wall Street, University of California, and University of Puerto Rico, document the creativity that lies within critical mobilizations and the contagious proliferation of forms that this emergent politics takes.

All of this work is set to work in a design build especially for this issue by Jamie Skye Bianco and Zac DavidM. This build out of the design of the issue inverts what has become the standard proprietary formula for the proliferation of publications amidst the crisis of publishing. The promise to expand to fit remains very much on our horizon.

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Culture Industries

Critical Purchase in Neoliberal Times



Critical Purchase in Neoliberal Times

Ien Ang, Miriam Bartha, Bruce Burgett, Ron Krabill

"Critical Purchase in Neoliberal Times" is an edited conversation with Ien Ang and three members of the Cultural Studies Praxis Collective (CSPC): Miriam Bartha, Bruce Burgett, and Ron Krabill. The transcript of the conversation conducted at the University of Washington was reworked and revised by the interlocutors. The document as a whole surfaces and addresses a series of questions about engaged and community-based forms of cultural studies scholarship; multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and media policy; and the future of the transnational field of cultural studies in the context of the neoliberal turn in global higher education.

The conversation is timely since it opens the problematic of the cultural industries to issues that are specific to the university as one site where culture takes place. It locates cultural studies as a critical discourse and practice in the university, but it also encourages its practitioners to learn more about how they can study culture in ways that engage and catalyze collaboration across diverse sectors. In order to promote this learning, we invite readers to send us comments on the conversation.[\[1\]](#) Following a strategy used by the CSPC in its meetings, we ask each contributor to choose a brief passage, sentence, or phrase that they found useful, provocative, or engaging, and to amplify on its significance in the current moment. Responses will be added to the text.

From Cultural Studies to Cultural Engagement



Miriam Bartha

We thought we'd begin by asking you about the trajectory of your career. Your scholarship has taken up a wide range of concerns, starting with media reception and institutions, then turning toward transnational cultural studies and multiculturalism, and now focusing on cultural research as a form of community engagement, with particular attention to media policy. Can you trace the movement of your interests and concerns for us?



Ien Ang

Within the great variety of the topics I've been working on over the last 25 years or so, there has been both continuity and change. The continuity is that I have always been compelled to address issues that I felt were central to what's going on in society at large. Taking a cultural studies approach to those issues meant questioning some of the dominant assumptions that were circulating, trying to understand the complexities and contradictions involved. *Watching Dallas*, my first book in the 1980s, analyzed the reception of the then famous TV series *Dallas* in the Netherlands. That research project was related at the time to the enormous controversy the series had elicited in the Dutch context. It was seen as a symbol of cultural imperialism, and the discourse of television was very much affected by the enormous success of internationally-

distributed, U.S.-produced programs like *Dallas*. In looking at the reception of that program by ordinary viewers, I was interested in the perspectives that do not get into the public sphere if we only listen to the chattering classes, the intellectuals who make comments in newspapers and so forth. A lot of cultural studies work is about bringing out such voices and articulating perspectives that otherwise would not be heard.

In 1991, I moved to Australia and turned my attention more squarely toward questions of race and ethnicity. At the time in Australia, there was a prominent discourse regarding Australia's so-called "enmeshment" with Asia. Australia, as the only "Western" country apart from New Zealand that is located in the Asian region, saw that North America and Mexico had developed NAFTA, Europe had the European Union, and wondered, what about us? In response, the idea of the Asian-ization of Australia encouraged a language that mixed an economically-motivated management discourse and an international relations discourse of security. But what are the cultural dimensions of this idea? What does it mean for national identity? What does it mean for people especially of Asian background themselves living in Australia? I thought there was an opening there, too, for new perspectives and new voices, and I was interested in that. Two of my subsequent book projects took up these issues: a monograph entitled *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*; and a co-edited collection, *Alter/Asians: Asian-Australian Identities in Art, Media and Popular Culture* (2000).

The work that I have been doing since then at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) has focused on community engagement and bringing cultural studies out of the academy, if you like. I became the director of a research center located at UWS called the Centre for Cultural Research, now the Institute for Cultural and Society. UWS has a very strong community engagement commitment to its region. My sense was that the only way that we, as cultural studies researchers, could succeed within that institutional context was by taking community engagement seriously as both a task and an exploration of ourselves - by doing new research in new ways that would bring the knowledge we've developed, in theory and in methodology, into much more collaborative forms of engagement. This turn toward the scholarship of engagement was also a way of trying to unsettle dominant practices of cultural studies, because I think cultural studies as an academic field has become quite complacent - I could even use the word boring - in that its discussions about race, about ethnicity, about gender and sex have become so predictable. We know what people are going to say before they say it. But what happens if we mobilize this type of knowledge in other contexts by engaging with other sectors? That's the question I have become interested in.



MB:

Your narrative highlights a number of salient themes from your work with Australia's Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). That work offers a context in which you can mobilize knowledge and questions in new ways regarding race and ethnicity in both national and transnational frames. You offered a perspective on a specific, local organizational case, but also one that mediated national policies and perspectives, and responded to transnational migrations and flows.



IA:

Yes, indeed. I am concerned with SBS, which is very much an Australian case study. But given that we always work both locally and globally, I have to be able to explain this organization in a way that isn't just specific to that organization. Though the issue of the local and the global has been with us for some time now, it's not always easy to translate from the local to the global, and in our own practice we realize this much more.



Bruce Burgett

I want to dig into that argument about the local and the global by linking it to your reference to cultural studies research methodologies. In the arc of your career there's a continuous argument for the necessity of ethnographic work in cultural studies. You

began by doing a reception ethnography – and not just a textual interpretation – to tell us what a show like *Dallas* means and does in a transnational frame, and you have now extended that to an organizational ethnography of SBS. It seems that there are some real consistencies here, but also some moments of change. I’m particularly interested in the organizational context and scale of your own work. In that regard, could you say a little more about the institutional context of what you’re doing at UWS and with the Institute for Culture and Society? What’s working, what’s challenging, and what do you see developing?



IA:

Well, I’m a big believer in turning necessity into opportunity. In terms of research, my methodological inclination has always been ethnographic. I’m interested in the details of a situation, details that may seem meaningless but, put together as part of a big puzzle, yield a rich description of what the situation is like. That description then has to be put into the context of a larger narrative or argument; that’s where the big picture comes in. It’s not about description for description’s sake. For example, I became interested in the practice of subtitling and how it was introduced within SBS as an adaptive response to the mandate of multicultural broadcasting. A lot of people didn’t think that was an important topic at all. But by describing the decision-making processes that were happening around those practices, you can show exactly how they say something much broader and much bigger about cultural politics, in this case about language, power, and intercultural relations. We discuss these dynamics in a chapter of our book *The SBS Story* (2008).

At the same time, I don’t necessarily make a distinction between an ethnography of audience reception and an ethnography of an organization. They are different sides to different problematics, perhaps, but the method is consistent. Studying audience reception suggests how ordinary people make meaning in everyday life. An organizational ethnography focuses on how organizations make themselves work in everyday life. I’m interested in the relationship between those two, how everyday life gets organized and lived and how institutions have an impact on that. Ideally speaking, those two elements would always have to be interrelated or at least co-articulated for us to understand contemporary cultural relations at any level of scale.



BB:

In the work of the Institute, I’m wondering if you’re developing different modes of engagement with these same methods. When you partner with an organization such as SBS, doesn’t that locate your research practice in a more complex institutional context? I ask because much of what you’re describing echoes discussions of engaged or cross-sectoral forms of cultural studies in the United States, including what we are doing at UW Bothell with our Master of Arts in Cultural Studies or at UW Seattle with our graduate Certificate in Public Scholarship. On the ground, the discourse of cross-sectoral engagement can mean everything from enhancing purely neoliberal forms of economic development to working with progressive and radical grassroots community organizations. That neoliberal environment creates a very different setting for research, especially compared to what cultural studies practitioners were doing in the late 1980s.



IA:

Oh, yes, absolutely. At UWS, this work is a financial necessity: we only do projects if we can get research grants for them, and getting research grants is the performance indicator that gets acknowledgement within our university system. Some grant schemes specifically encourage this mode of cross-sectoral research and they have been in existence since the late 1990s, the idea being that academic researchers could and should attempt to make their work useful by collaborating with organizations outside academia. In the past, most of these grant schemes targeted science and technology researchers, not so much qualitative social science researchers, and certainly not humanities researchers. One of the motivations – the economic motivations – for doing this research was simply to see whether we could exploit these grant opportunities for

our own purposes. But when you take that path, it's important to maintain intellectual integrity, because we found it easy to make links with different organizations and community groups. The problem was to make sure that we chose those projects and those organizations that we could work with. Otherwise, community engagement very quickly becomes an expedient activity. We had to learn that the hard way. Now we are much more cautious in making links. The most important element is to ensure that you work with people, organizations, or groups with which you have some political, intellectual affinity in terms of objectives and interests. You have to be able to have a conversation on an equal footing; you have to be able to develop trust; you have to feel able to learn from them, and not just that they can learn from you. That's absolutely crucial.



MB:

One of the consequences of perceiving partnerships to be opportunistic or instrumental, on either the university's or the community partners' part, can be a deep and abiding skepticism regarding these kinds of collaborations, particularly the political stakes and consequences of engaging in them. Have you encountered skepticism of this nature, and if so, how have you worked with it?



IA:

Of course there can be a lot of opportunism, on both sides. We've encountered it when a community group, or even a wealthy museum, would approach us with an invitation to work together that essentially amounted to a cheap way of getting research done. Had they contracted with a consultancy company, they would have paid much more. That's a risk you run in a situation where there's no real intellectual exchange going on. So the skepticism is necessary, I think. There are always different perspectives and interests. It's the moment of encounter that has to work well, and things need to be discussed appropriately. In any partnership, there are things you can talk about because your perspectives overlap, but other things you simply can't talk about because your perspectives diverge. That's a fact of life, and that's where people can become skeptical. But we always have to live with a dose of skepticism, whatever we do.



MB:

Clearly context is everything here, but it's also true that skepticism on the part of community groups is often the legacy of their historically uneven partnerships with university researchers. Actually engaging with that skepticism, that legacy, can be an opportunity for learning and shifting practices on both sides.



IA:

Yes, that's true. And it depends on what kind of organization it is. For many grassroots community organizations, a university is a scary institution. They might feel empowered by their encounters with it, or they might feel like they need to try to get as much as possible out of it. They might feel intimidated or unable to express their own perspectives. Those power relations really need to be addressed in some way. It's a question of diplomacy.



Ron Krabill

Let me speak to the other side of that dynamic. In the U.S. context, when you go out and talk about this kind of work, depending on the audience, sometimes you get a very predictable and critical response. Most forms of engaged and community-based cultural

studies can be spun as contributing to the neoliberalization or instrumentalization of a more critical cultural studies practice. Do you get the same kind of response in Australia or elsewhere, and how do you reply to it?



IA:

I haven't received that response directly, but an element of it is true. For me, the question is not so much about the neoliberalization of cultural studies, as it is about how cultural studies can survive in neoliberal times. We do live in neoliberal times. The question is how can we produce practices that maintain some critical purchase, and some political values that we are committed to. And that is always a question of compromise, I think, a question of negotiation. I don't have a lot of time for people who say that we have to remain pure. In my view, too many cultural studies academics are too content and self-satisfied with the production of critique, the more theoretically sophisticated the better. I believe that for cultural studies knowledge to be socially useful, we need to move beyond cultural critique; we need to develop what I call in my introduction to the "Navigating Complexity" special issue of the journal *Continuum* "cultural intelligence" (2011).



RK:

The other response that we've gotten from people, academics and others, is to raise the question of what is new about this type of scholarship. There have been similar sorts of struggles between "basic" and "applied" research in the natural and social sciences for decades, including the emergence over the last decade or two of community and participatory research methods, norms, and strategies. Is there something new about this turn toward engaged research? Could it also be described as an export of funding mechanisms typical of the natural and social sciences to the humanities, or is there something distinctive?



IA:

I don't really care if this is a completely new model or not; I think it is a new practice within cultural studies. In other words, what is new is the specificity of cultural studies knowledge and expertise. Quantitative and positivist social scientists offer a very different kind of expertise, and it can be very useful. But the kinds of knowledge and expertise cultural studies researchers bring to a collaboration are quite specific and also, for lack of a better word, quite vague. That's a learning curve in itself.



RK:

I agree. At the same time, so much cultural studies research has focused on the radical critique of the institution of the university. The moment when that critique rubs up against the kinds of practical concerns you talk about is full of tensions and questions, compared to other fields that may not have oriented themselves around critique in quite the same way. You've been asking us to think about cultural studies in a very pragmatic way, when the tradition of critique pushes us toward a very purist form of critique and critical theory. For me, this raises a pragmatic question. If the relationship between the university and the community-based organization doesn't effectively avoid all forms of repression, should we abandon it? The risk inherent in this question is that you're never going to have any partnership with anyone, with the exception of other university researchers in your professional field.



IA:

In that sense, I'm very much with Stuart Hall: I do believe that practices are not pre-determined, that there are no guarantees, and that it's really the articulation of the practice in the moment that matters. You have to be on top of what's going on and try to be vigilant and self-reflexive. This is much harder political work than the work that is merely expedient or that takes for granted its own critical radicalness. Here, the question and the decision is always of the moment, always conjunctural - is this the right thing to do? What are the ethical and political issues involved? Pragmatism is not easy to choose.



MB:

That makes sense, but pragmatism also raises the question of outcomes and impact, and how you measure them. To pick up on that: we've been talking about creative forms of grants-funded university-community partnerships. One of the demands that routinely accompanies this sort of initiative is assessment, which implicitly or explicitly raises questions of what is valued, who frames the criteria of value, and what measures count. How have you worked with these questions in the context of community collaborations?



IA:

That's a very hard one. As the director of a research center, which has to perform according to certain standards in the university, I often adhere to quite conventional academic standards. Community engagement can become so time-consuming, so absorbing, that the translation back to the academic context is sometimes forgotten. Students and researchers need to think about what their work means for scholarship and for knowledge production in the academic context. That's where the difficult issues of assessing people emerge.



MB:

And do you see any of these mechanisms shifting to include other forms of assessment or other perspectives that may not be coming solely from inside the academic institution?



IA:

In Australia, there has been an effort to introduce a nationwide research assessment exercise. The first version was called the Research Quality Framework (RQF). This effort failed, but it's still instructive. The RQF was supposed to assess research units, including our center, based on overall quality and impact. Quality, in this context, refers to academic quality, and is measured quantitatively by counting the number of your scholarly publications, the amount of grant income you have earned, and so on. Impact assessment was conceived differently, and occasioned a major discussion at the national level. The proposed outcome in the RQF was that we would have to write and submit a narrative about our impact, using case studies. This is very suitable for humanities-based centers because it does not measure impact using presumably objective criteria, let alone the types of impact that might be more measurable within the natural and physical sciences. Instead, it honors the narrative you provide: we worked together with this organization; as a result of our collaboration, this, and this, and this has happened within that organization, and that can be seen as the impact of our research. The new minister after the change of government in 2008 did not like this more subjective evaluative strategy at all, so the whole impact assessment effort was discarded. Which I thought was a shame, although it looks like it is going to be reintroduced in the coming years.



BB:

There are also outcomes-based forms of assessment and evaluation criteria that can get written into the beginning of a project, negotiated in advance with the partners in the project. The positive spin on this type of assessment, which is also very labor intensive, is that if you do it right then it can really improve a project along the way and make it more reciprocal. This is opposed to forms of assessment that tend to be more summative and to happen only at the end of a project or collaboration.



IA:

That's true. In a lot of our projects there are milestones or achievements that aren't assessments necessarily, but are indicators. For example, you might produce a report, or an exhibition, or organize a community forum-activities, apart from academic publications, that are integral to the projects.



RK:

Has the expectation of that assessment moment ever changed who you considered partnering with on the front end - especially if the outcomes are mandated by the state? I'm imagining that if you're collaborating with a politically radical group, the success of that group and project could look like a failure from the perspective of the state.



IA:

That's an interesting question. We haven't really collaborated with overtly political groups. Most of the groups we work with have progressive objectives, but they're not political in the sense of explicitly advocating certain political changes. I think all collaboration works best if it's not driven by ideological motives. A lot of cultural studies is very ideological, as you know, but my practice really works against that. I think it's important to say that when we do research and develop knowledge there's no guarantee of what the outcomes will be. We're not there to develop knowledge that will make an organization look good. The inquiry has to be open and the research independent. There should not be any guarantees in advance.

Multiculturalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Media Policy



RK:

Perhaps we can explore the question of progressive political and research agendas through your own work at the intersection of media policy, television, and critical multicultural studies, and specifically what you've referred to as a "cosmopolitan multiculturalism" supported by media policy. Cultural studies has explored the subtle influences of hegemony or governmentality, with the result that in talking about specific policies we're often looking for these nuances and their consequences. But how do we create media policy that nurtures or allows for a transformational shift in how media takes place?



IA:

Of course there are many different scales of media policy. The most visible operate at the macro-level: the national media policy level; the debates about the future of public service broadcasting; the introduction of digital television; the funding for new communications technologies. That is the background of what is going on. But I'm more interested in the micro- and meso-levels of media policy where, assuming the relative stability of these institutions and media organizations, we can look at how they can operate in a way that is faithful to certain political and cultural objectives. In the case of SBS, for example, I am interested in how an organization that was established in

the 1970s with its multicultural mission can still be relevant for the 21st century, and how that relevance can and should be translated into particular media practices.

Cosmopolitan multiculturalism is something else again. With SBS, I was lucky to find a site for research and engagement that brought together my interest in media policy, institutions and culture, and difference and diversity. To my frustration, the articulation of multiculturalism and public broadcasting was never really spelled out in Australian discussions of SBS. People would talk about it as a direct expression of multiculturalism without looking at the specificities of media culture. But when you look at the specificities of media culture, you can see that through media, through television, cosmopolitan versions of multiculturalism are produced more easily because of the public broadcasting service mandate. A lot of multiculturalism is quite segmented, as you know, and directed to separate groups. Public service broadcasting has to engage some of those particularist tendencies but it also counters them by aiming for a general or national audience. It has to develop a much more interactive version of multiculturalism that's about exchange, exploration of the other, engagement with the other, and debate and discussion, rather than identity politics in the narrow sense. That's where the cosmopolitanism comes in.



BB:

I wonder how that argument plays out in contexts like the United States where the social democratic state has been under siege, even as the discourse of multiculturalism has been on the ascent. Does multiculturalism risk becoming allied with the neoliberal attack on the state? How does that change shift the challenges of multicultural politics in the context of SBS?



IA:

The social democratic state definitely is withering, but in Australia support for public service broadcasting will still be there, even now that the government is much more neoliberal. One reason is that Australia is a much smaller country. There is no way that media can operate exclusively on a market basis if you want to have diversity of media, so government support will always be there. But in terms of multiculturalism as a social democratic policy, neoliberal elements are definitely shifting the emphasis to market forces, privatization, and market driven welfare provision. The relationship between government services for immigrant settlement and SBS is quite a distant one, however, because SBS is a separate, independent organization.



BB:

I find quite compelling the way you describe SBS's impact as creating one model of what a cosmopolitan multiculturalism could be and require. Expanding on this, I'm curious about how your work with SBS has reshaped your thinking about the relation between the cultural and the political. Has your engagement with SBS led you to reimagine the space of the political in the field of cultural studies?



IA:

I think the political in cultural studies is always the politics of negotiation, though a lot of cultural studies scholarship has been focused on the politics of resistance. Negotiation brings us back to issues like pragmatism and compromise. I like the term used by Michael Herzfeld (2005), an anthropologist who writes comparative ethnographies, of the "militant middle ground." It's the middle ground that we have to occupy, but it's a militant middle ground, and we need to hold on to it militantly. It's precisely there that all the conflicting and intersecting forces meet, and it's there that we have to work out a livable and sustainable situation for whomever is part of that situation.



BB:

That phrase, the militant politics of the middle ground, is very interesting. Is there a way we might link it to our earlier discussion of the redistribution of how knowledge is made and how creative resources are distributed across collaborations and partnerships?



IA:

Yes. It is through the practice of collaboration that certain objectives and values are articulated. That's a good way of putting it, that these collaborative projects are really about the circulation of knowledge and through that circulation, dialogue and exchange can create new knowledge that is relevant for that particular context. Later on you can use it to develop broader knowledge that can then be translated to broader contexts.



BB:

That response echoes your argument in two essays - "Who Needs Cultural Research?" (1999) and "From Cultural Studies to Cultural Research" (2006) - where you draw on the work of Michael Gibbons and his colleagues in *The New Production of Knowledge* (1994). Their work suggests that for several decades now universities have been producing more researchers than they can absorb in their own employment bases. One result has been the appearance of research centers in other sectors which, in turn, creates a knowledge geography where new cross-sectoral partnerships can take place. The interesting thing is that *The New Production of Knowledge* concludes with a pretty dire picture of the future: new knowledge partnerships will become increasingly unequal; funding will become more centralized; research will become more elite across sectors; and knowledge production will be increasingly monopolized, rather than redistributed. You rely on the same sociological analysis and your Institute is clearly working in this type of environment, but the political trajectory moves in a different and more egalitarian direction.



IA:

That's true, I think. Gibbons describes the dominant global trajectory, and we try to go against that grain where we can, although I am under no illusion that we will in any way be a counter-hegemonic force. In Australia some elite research centers, like so-called Centres for Excellence, and especially in the sciences, get huge amounts of money. Institutes like ours want to be able to compete for those stakes, but you can do other things with that money. It's the circulation of knowledge, the redistribution and the democratization, that we try to focus on. But this is only possible in limited ways; we too need to pursue a certain elitism and increasingly so because of the requirements imposed on us by the research quality assessments we discussed earlier. That is the constant struggle. I should also say that now that we are an institute, rather than a centre, the emphasis of our work has become more conventionally academic. We still do community-engaged research, but it is only part of what we do, and I have to fight hard to keep our researchers motivated to do it, given that the rewards are so elusive.



BB:

And that's a very significant shift from earlier cultural studies work that used key words like "resistance," "reform," and "rebellion."



MB:

It also requires a different understanding of the practical politics of scholarship, and new strategies for representing this form of critical labor. The essay and monograph don't tend to capture the politics of negotiation very well.



IA:

No, they don't. This is still an open question for what's now being called the scholarship of engagement. The university wants engaged scholarship to happen, and a lot of people are trying to do it. But an academic helping an organization by writing their annual report is just providing a service, what in the past was called outreach. Scholarly engagement has to be something different. It has to have the theoretical and conceptual rigor that merits the name of scholarship. I'm not saying this because I believe it in absolute terms, but simply because it's strategically necessary. It's a survival mechanism because at present, the academic world is still completely dominated by old-fashioned values, scholarly values, and we have to engage with those as well.



RK:

I wonder if there's a link between this negotiation between two forms of scholarship and the tendency we were talking about earlier concerning the move toward larger, more powerful, more elite research centers. What could potentially develop is that large centers have more space for researchers who maintain and reproduce the values legible to that old-fashioned scholarship while they also push its boundaries and limits. At the same time, the more interesting work may come from smaller centers that can be more nimble and create different kinds of cross-sectoral partnerships with grassroots organizations that then feed new kinds of scholarship that become legible in the bigger centers.



IA:

Yes. It depends a lot on the people who do it and it depends on leadership and vision, which is management talk, but a lot of it really works like that. At SBS, the same story applies. It depended very much on a few people who put everything into the organization and made it something worthwhile. In this context, the push towards professionalization was very important. This is relevant to research centers like ours—professionalization in the media world is equivalent to scholarly quality in the academic world. You have to support innovations that find new ways of doing this work, and you have to maintain credibility in the world in which you want to intervene, all at the same time.

Futures of Cultural Studies



BB:

Your recent writings would seem to exemplify the shift you've been describing. In them, you're documenting the research you're doing at your Institute, and also placing it within an academic research conversation about what does and should constitute research. It makes perfect sense to me that part of the work of a single project would be creating something that is useful for that organization—SBS—and also something that transforms how we think about research practice in an academic field like cultural studies. That's the step beyond the previous cultural studies, in which the last sentence of every article typically implored readers to move from theory to practice. Now that sentence appears at the end of the first paragraph. There's less throat-clearing. Following through on that shift requires a more hybrid style of academic work.



IA:

I think so, too. The 1990s were the period of theory with the big T. That's really over now, and people are starting to find new ways of doing useful work across academic and non-academic contexts. It's quite interesting to see that and it's encouraging that younger scholars are interested in doing this kind of work too.



RK:

As someone who did the scholarship of engagement as a graduate student and assistant professor, I need to ask this question. What are the issues of sustainability that arise as a result of this shift, particularly for untenured scholars on the tenure-track, on the cusp of something old and something new? Or for graduate students, if the ideal scholar now writes both an annual report and a dissertation? How should we think about the sustainability of a practice-oriented, community-engaged cultural studies of engagement? The risk is that it becomes another form of academic speed-up - more teaching, more research, more service - especially for junior scholars.



IA:

Yes, that's absolutely true. It's one of those things that needs to be addressed and hopefully it's not just going to be addressed by the senior scholars, but also by the junior scholars themselves, in collaboration. Within the university, rules and guidelines and the kinds of assessment criteria we talked about earlier need to be looked at and changed, and that in itself is a struggle.



BB:

Rethinking assessment criteria is critical. But I also worry that the story of the "old" and the "new" sometimes assumes that there's a generic graduate student or junior faculty member out there who is doing traditional research and then has to do something else. Another way to tell that story is that that generic figure of the graduate student gets created by weeding other potential graduate students out of graduate education. Or that the institution has taken that student and cultivated one possibility or two possibilities in him or her rather than multiple possibilities. So while the worry about speed-up is justified, it's also important to think about broader forms of professional development in this context and about who gets into the pipeline of academic institutions. Other students might say, well, I did graduate school for a year but it wasn't for me, so now I'm going to work in a community-based organization instead. That frames an either-or choice rather than a set of intersecting possibilities.



RK:

Absolutely. From my perspective, that's what makes the institutional politics of assessment and evaluation so critical. The burden of transformation needs to rest on the institution, not just the individual, even as individuals work together to push for those changes.



BB:

And this discussion of practice, collaboration, and research brings us back to the two future-oriented questions with which we'd like to conclude. As you think over your extensive experiences working with and across diverse constituencies, what have you learned about what works well in collaboration, inside and outside of academic institutions, and what doesn't work?



IA:

A lot depends on the people who happen to be working together. People have to be able to get on, people have to be able to have fun together - all of these relatively mundane things are absolutely important. At the Institute for Culture and Society we haven't done everything perfectly. It's probably easier to talk about what can go wrong in collaboration than what goes well. There's noticeable tension, for instance, between senior scholars and junior scholars, because the senior scholars frequently take principal roles in running the programs, doing many different things at the same time. The result is that they don't have quality time to spend on the projects, where the junior scholars are most active. In terms of collaboration, then, we need to examine the logistics of collaboration, the practical ways in which people can actually make time for these projects.

The other problem that I see is fragmentation. This problem is very much related to cultural studies research, precisely because it is such a flexible intellectual practice and can engage with so many areas of practice and professional contexts. In our case, we have people working in the tourism area, people working in the healthcare area, people working in the road safety area, people working in the museum sector, people working with local government. With all these different organizations involved, you can generate a kind of centrifugal effect. The question is, as cultural researchers, how do we come back together? How do we bring all those experiences back to the Institute and develop those cross-sectoral conversations and exchanges to enrich the more substantive theoretical and conceptual research? That's a challenge. I'd say that the de-centering of Centres and Institutes is one of our problems.



BB:

This insight may also apply to the de-centering of cultural studies, which raises our second question: As you look toward the future, what do you see as compelling for those of us who work in cultural studies and are interested in developing collaborative and cross-methodological projects, specifically in arts and cultural arenas, and through arts and cultural practices? If you were to place a wager, where would you lay a bet on the future of cultural studies? Where do educational institutions, including universities but not only universities, fit into that picture?



IA:

I find it interesting that interdisciplinarity is increasingly being seen as the place where innovative work is happening, even in the most conservative universities. In that sense, the kind of work we do in newly formed or more marginal institutions might turn out to be in the vanguard. Those in older institutions have to constantly break barriers. That costs a lot of energy. We don't have to do that because we already work together. It'll take a few decades at least to see how this will pan out in the future, because universities change very slowly.



BB:

That makes sense to me since we're talking about cross-sectoral collaboration, inside and outside of the university. Interdisciplinarity is one way to think of cross-sectoral work within a university, not only between academic disciplines, but also among different academic and non-academic units on university campuses. Centers are places where that interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral work can be incubated.



RK:

But then the question Ien was just talking about becomes really interesting. If the center becomes one of the main ways of creating interdisciplinary research, how do you keep the center flexible enough to create meaningfully interdisciplinary activity without de-centering it to such a degree that you lose that common cause?



IA:

Yes, that's a risk, especially if the game requires that you continually develop new projects. But it's also exciting. I think environmental issues, for example, are going to be really important, and I can imagine working more with scientists and engineers on future projects. This type of collaboration would represent a move toward a much more profound interdisciplinarity, and we haven't done that much yet. I guess that's one wager I'd be willing to make about the future.



BB:

No doubt, though, that wager could open a whole new conversation and would require that new collaborators be brought to the table. For now, let's end here by thanking you, Ien, for this conversation. We appreciate this opportunity to reflect on these questions and issues with you.

Notes

1. Readers interested in commenting should send their contribution to **Miriam Bartha** (mbartha@uw.edu) and **Bruce Burgett** (bburgett@uwb.edu). Please limit comments to 500 words and include a brief biographical note (75 words). Comments will be reviewed and edited prior to publication.

Bios

- **Ien Ang** is Director of the Institute for Culture and Society at the University of Western Sydney. She is the author of many books and articles, including *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination* (1985), *Alter/Asians: Asian-Australian Identities in Art, Media and Popular Culture* (2000), *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (2001), *The SBS Story: The Challenge of Cultural Diversity* (2008), and an edited special issue of the *Continuum: Journal for Cultural and Media Studies*, entitled 'Navigating Complexities' (2011).
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Universities in Question

Manifestos

Manifestos, an introduction

Declaration of the Occupation of New York City

Solidarity Statement From Cairo

Ocúp(arte): The Humanities Manifesto

The Manifesto : We Are Many Youth, But With One Struggle!

Pedagogy For Our Future

SmartAction

Introduction

smartAction Gallery

La Performatividad Colectiva como Arte Público

smartAction Catalog

Manifestos, an introduction

University Liberation Front

"Let it be known: The UC system is an apparatus that shapes students and their thoughts within machinery that is patriarchal, homophobic, racially exclusionary, and classist." These words were written in March 2010 in response to the UC San Diego administration's weak and complacent reaction to the mass mobilization of students and faculty of color fighting against the toxic racial climate at our campus. Against the backdrop of nation-wide student mobilizations against tuition increases, austerity measures and the privatization of the public university, many of us recognized the relationship between social injustice and the privatized university. And we were by no means alone in this; in cities across California, protests against the privatization of the UC took place alongside protests against other cuts in public funding and social services, creating networked movements rooted in community organizing and a broader understanding of the interconnected nature of oppression. Both within and without California, allies fought interconnected battles in the prison abolition movement, the Divest Israel movement, the battle for ethnic studies in Arizona, and student occupations in Puerto Rico, among others.

As we fought alongside our students, professors and neighbors in these movements, we began to confront our complicity in an educational apparatus that advanced the needs of corporations rather than the needs of the communities we were fighting for. Realizing that the university depends upon our labor as teaching assistants, graders and low-level instructors, we began to wonder what would happen if we adopted a practice of strategic betrayal to reclaim spaces in the university for critical education. We found places in our assigned curriculum to bring in Banksy, George Winnie, Jr., and Tupac. Rather than pushing our students towards superficial, standardized symbols of achievement—the formulaic essay, the A, the degree—we searched for opportunities to provide our students with the analytic tools to understand how the world spins and how they could change the spin of the world.

In 2011 and 2012, the mass mobilizations against neoliberal and neocolonial formations of power provided us with new lenses for thinking about the roles and responsibilities of the university. We nodded along to YouTube videos of our favorite activist-scholars addressing crowds of protestors as their words seemingly demonstrated the relevance and subversive potential of certain forms of academic critique. But still we wondered what it would look like if scholars brought these movements back into their classrooms not as illustrative examples but as organizing principles. What would it look like if we occupied and reclaimed our own classrooms and spaces of learning? How could a pedagogy of the 99% challenge the underlying logics of the neoliberal university? What would happen if we placed the experiences, struggles and desires of our communities – communities of color, and working class, queer and transgender communities—at the center of the classroom? Hoping to prompt people to rethink the relationship between the university and community struggles, we drafted *Pedagogy for Our Future* in the fall of 2011. Informed

by our experiences in smaller-scale struggles against privatization, police brutality, labor exploitation and racism and inspired by the scope and tone of larger mass mobilizations, we sought to articulate a set of practices capable of opening up spaces of possibility within the neoliberal university.

Far from comprehensive, *Pedagogy for Our Future* was meant to be added to, adapted and revised by activist-educators (broadly defined) according to the needs and philosophies of their local struggles. Because the manifesto was written to spark a dialogue rather than advance a particular program, we have chosen to present it here as part of a dossier of interrelated documents produced by youth-oriented communities struggling against global systems of exploitation and oppression. Whether produced in the barricades of Río Piedras or the reclaimed streets of Cairo, these calls to action and understanding critique intersecting systems of exploitation and gesture to points of solidarity and coalition-formation. In doing so, they open up spaces for imagining new futures and they create the conditions in which such a future may indeed come to pass.

The dossier begins with a pair of documents: the official statement approved by Occupy Wall Street's General Assembly on September 29, 2011, and the letter of solidarity sent from comrades in Cairo one month later, on October 24, 2011. By enumerating a lengthy list of specific grievances, the Occupy Wall Street declaration defines a collective "we" in opposition to a corrupt "they." Thus, the movement becomes a battle of "us" against "them" rather than against the underlying systems of exploitation and oppression. Read as a response to the Occupy statement, the letter from Cairo makes an instructive intervention into this discourse by repositioning the movement as a node in a larger, global movement against transnational capitalism and its neocolonizing effects. Drawing upon their own experiences reclaiming and rebuilding their nation, the Cairo authors counsel the Occupy movement to abandon their fixation on abstract concepts like "true democracy" and to focus instead on reclaiming public spaces and creating concrete alternatives to the status quo.

Written over a year before the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, *Ocup(arte): The Humanities Manifesto* emerged from the student protest movement at University of Puerto Rico. Against the backdrop of nation-wide student protests against tuition increases and budget cuts, students in the Faculty of the Humanities and the Faculty of the Social Sciences at the Río Piedras campus announced their intention to occupy both faculties in response to the continuing privatization of the public university. Rejecting what it calls the "fiscal fetish shared by the State and the university's administration," the manifesto reimagines education as a collective, creative enterprise, an opportunity to create an inclusive community capable of resisting the competitive individualism characteristic of capitalist society. By taking up the fight for the humanities as a means of challenging oppressive formations of economic, social and political power, the manifesto invokes imagination, plurality and inclusion as central tools of liberation.

Whereas *Ocup(arte)* is primarily devoted to imagining an alternative to traditional educational models, *We Are Many Youth, But With One Struggle* attempts to redefine the relationship between student-led struggles for educational justice and broader struggles for social justice. Sometimes referred to as the Manifesto of International Student Struggle because of its transnational origin, the document was approved at an international meeting called jointly by CSP-Conlutas (a Brazilian central trade union trying to organize labor unions, popular movements, and the youth in one unified struggle) and the Union Sindical Solidaire (a French association of federations and national unions) on May 2-3, 2012. Though initially signed by representatives from eight nations, the manifesto has since been adopted by student organizations across the world. Linking multiple struggles into a portrait of a powerful, planetary youth movement, the document advocates a May '68-style student-worker solidarity and places the university at the center of a global fight for justice. Far from a city on a hill, the university is thus taken up as a central battlefield for combating larger systems of exploitation and oppression.

And so we fight for a liberatory education. As the Cairo authors advise in their closing paragraph: "Occupy more, find each other, build larger and larger networks and keep discovering new ways to experiment with social life, consensus and democracy." In different ways, the documents collected in this dossier attempt to do just that: to make connections with other movements, to imagine new learning communities, and to carve out spaces of possibility and transformation.

Declaration of the Occupation of New York City

As we gather together in solidarity to express a feeling of mass injustice, we must not lose sight of what brought us together. We write so that all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world can know that we are your allies.

As one people, united, we acknowledge the reality: that the future of the human race requires the cooperation of its members; that our system must protect our rights, and upon corruption of that system, it is up to the individuals to protect their own rights, and those of their neighbors; that a democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments. We have peaceably assembled here, as is our right, to let these facts be known.

They have taken our houses through an illegal foreclosure process, despite not having the original mortgage.

They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses.

They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one's skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.

They have poisoned the food supply through negligence, and undermined the farming system through monopolization.

They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless nonhuman animals, and actively hide these practices.

They have continuously sought to strip employees of the right to negotiate for better pay and safer working conditions.

They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education, which is itself a human right.

They have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers' healthcare and pay.

They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility.

They have spent millions of dollars on legal teams that look for ways to get them out of contracts in regards to health insurance.

They have sold our privacy as a commodity.

They have used the military and police force to prevent freedom of the press.

They have deliberately declined to recall faulty products endangering lives in pursuit of profit.

They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce.

They have donated large sums of money to politicians supposed to be regulating them.

They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.

They continue to block generic forms of medicine that could save people's lives in order to protect investments that have already turned a substantive profit.

They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents, faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit.

They purposefully keep people misinformed and fearful through their control of the media.

They have accepted private contracts to murder prisoners even when presented with serious doubts about their guilt.

They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad.

They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.

They continue to create weapons of mass destruction in order to receive government contracts.*

To the people of the world,

We, the New York City General Assembly occupying Wall Street in Liberty Square, urge you to assert your power.

Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face, and generate solutions accessible to everyone.

To all communities that take action and form groups in the spirit of direct democracy, we offer support, documentation, and all of the resources at our disposal.

Join us and make your voices heard!

***These grievances are not all-inclusive.**

Solidarity Statement From Cairo

Comrades from Cairo

To all those in the United States currently occupying parks, squares and other spaces, your comrades in Cairo are watching you in solidarity. Having received so much advice from you about transitioning to democracy, we thought it's our turn to pass on some advice.

Indeed, we are now in many ways involved in the same struggle. What most pundits call "The Arab Spring" has its roots in the demonstrations, riots, strikes and occupations taking place all around the world, its foundations lie in years-long struggles by people and popular movements. The moment that we find ourselves in is nothing new, as we in Egypt and others have been fighting against systems of repression, disenfranchisement and the unchecked ravages of global capitalism (yes, we said it, capitalism): a System that has made a world that is dangerous and cruel to its inhabitants. As the interests of government increasingly cater to the interests and comforts of private, transnational capital, our cities and homes have become progressively more abstract and violent places, subject to the casual ravages of the next economic development or urban renewal scheme.

An entire generation across the globe has grown up realizing, rationally and emotionally, that we have no future in the current order of things. Living under structural adjustment policies and the supposed expertise of international organizations like the World Bank and IMF, we watched as our resources, industries and public services were sold off and dismantled as the "free market" pushed an addiction to foreign goods, to foreign food even. The profits and benefits of those freed markets went elsewhere, while Egypt and other countries in the South found their immiseration reinforced by a massive increase in police repression and torture.

The current crisis in America and Western Europe has begun to bring this reality home to you as well: that as things stand we will all work ourselves raw, our backs broken by personal debt and public austerity. Not content with carving out the remnants of the public sphere and the welfare state, capitalism and the austerity-state now even attack the private realm and people's right to decent dwelling as thousands of foreclosed-upon homeowners find themselves both homeless and indebted to the banks who have forced them on to the streets.

So we stand with you not just in your attempts to bring down the old but to experiment with the new. We are not protesting. Who is there to protest to? What could we ask them for that they could grant? We are occupying. We are reclaiming those same spaces of public practice that have been commodified, privatized and locked into the hands of faceless bureaucracy, real estate portfolios, and police 'protection'. Hold on to these spaces, nurture them, and let the boundaries of your occupations grow. After all, who built these parks, these plazas, these buildings? Whose labor made them real and livable? Why should it seem so natural that they should be withheld from us, policed and disciplined? Reclaiming these

spaces and managing them justly and collectively is proof enough of our legitimacy.

In our own occupations of Tahrir, we encountered people entering the Square every day in tears because it was the first time they had walked through those streets and spaces without being harassed by police; it is not just the ideas that are important, these spaces are fundamental to the possibility of a new world. These are public spaces. Spaces forgathering, leisure, meeting, and interacting - these spaces should be the reason we live in cities. Where the state and the interests of owners have made them inaccessible, exclusive or dangerous, it is up to us to make sure that they are safe, inclusive and just. We have and must continue to open them to anyone that wants to build a better world, particularly for the marginalized, excluded and for those groups who have suffered the worst.

What you do in these spaces is neither as grandiose and abstract nor as quotidian as "real democracy"; the nascent forms of praxis and social engagement being made in the occupations avoid the empty ideals and stale parliamentarianism that the term democracy has come to represent. And so the occupations must continue, because there is no one left to ask for reform. They must continue because we are creating what we can no longer wait for.

But the ideologies of property and propriety will manifest themselves again. Whether through the overt opposition of property owners or municipalities to your encampments or the more subtle attempts to control space through traffic regulations, anti-camping laws or health and safety rules. There is a direct conflict between what we seek to make of our cities and our spaces and what the law and the systems of policing standing behind it would have us do.

We faced such direct and indirect violence, and continue to face it. Those who said that the Egyptian revolution was peaceful did not see the horrors that police visited upon us, nor did they see the resistance and even force that revolutionaries used against the police to defend their tentative occupations and spaces: by the government's own admission; 99 police stations were put to the torch, thousands of police cars were destroyed, and all of the ruling party's offices around Egypt were burned down. Barricades were erected, officers were beaten back and pelted with rocks even as they fired tear gas and live ammunition on us. But at the end of the day on the 28th of January they retreated, and we had won our cities.

It is not our desire to participate in violence, but it is even less our desire to lose. If we do not resist, actively, when they come to take what we have won back, then we will surely lose. Do not confuse the tactics that we used when we shouted "peaceful" with fetishizing nonviolence; if the state had given up immediately we would have been overjoyed, but as they sought to abuse us, beat us, kill us, we knew that there was no other option than to fight back. Had we laid down and allowed ourselves to be arrested, tortured, and martyred to "make a point", we would be no less bloodied, beaten and dead. Be prepared to defend these things you have occupied, that you are

building, because, after everything else has been taken from us, these reclaimed spaces are so very precious.

By way of concluding then, our only real advice to you is to continue, keep going and do not stop. Occupy more, find each other, build larger and larger networks and keep discovering new ways to experiment with social life, consensus, and democracy. Discover new ways to use these spaces, discover new ways to hold on to them and never give them up again. Resist fiercely when you are under attack, but otherwise take pleasure in what you are doing, let it be easy, fun even. We are all watching one another now, and from Cairo we want to say that we are in solidarity with you, and we love you all for what you are doing.

Comrades from Cairo.

24th of October, 2011.

Ocúp(arte): The Humanities Manifesto

Humanities Action Committee, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras

The Humanities faculty is yours, his, hers, and ours. Let's transform it then, into an active and dynamic space filled with participation and collaboration. Let's modify the State and the Administration-fed attitudes of competition and anxiety, and replace them with cooperation, compassion and youthful jubilation. As existing power structures have already started to crack and shown their anti-humanist agendas; so let today and tomorrow be filled with love and a call to action. Our academic spaces are under siege from the powerful, and must be reclaimed as tools for liberation. As humanists we can imagine and create all sorts of possible worlds. It is time to realize them.

We are occupying our faculty in order to find ourselves, to cast aside any attempt to separate and alienate us. Instead of this kind of death, we have decided to un-muzzle our mouths and let the world know that a new world has taken shape from our hearts. We are a multitude which thinks, reflects, and criticizes; a generation whose heartbeat is steeled by the shared interaction between the fist and a kiss.

This is not a call to defend the University, but to redefine it into something new: one that is horizontal and non-hierarchic, participatory and democratic. Our action is a call for diversity, to the plurality that defines our educational space. It is the whole of all the types of rich knowledge that contributes to new and different worlds, countries, cities, multitudes and spaces. Such a colorful melody of difference and respect, solidarity and love, echoes along the halls of our faculty.

We are the children of crisis and marginalization, of an economic system that represses and plunders. We are the descendants of a political system that condemns participation and decides unilaterally, from the top down. But we are also the heirs of a long tradition of people that blazed a path for those rights that we now enjoy, that paid with sweat and blood for those benefits that face annihilation today. Therefore, we are retaking the UPR, so that those that follow tomorrow possess what we have endeavored to build: a multiplicity of knowledge, of perspectives that allow us to think freely in the world we live in, and the world we choose to create.

The fiscal fetish shared by the State and the university's administration conceives education as a production line of consumer goods. As it seems that the humanities do not offer this, they are targeted for gradual elimination. What the humanities do provide, and they choose to ignore, is the opportunity to be critical, to reflect and question, to give shape to worlds of sounds, of color, performances and of the written word, distinct from our own. Education cannot be seen through capital's narrow gaze or the market's whims. Such an education merely reproduces docile subjects and uncritical automatons. Let us smash the machine!

We propose a liberating and edifying education that generates autonomous and critical minds, in a collaborative bond between

professor and student. We want an education where everyone involved participates as those who teach and those who learn. Yet let us not confuse these verbs with the assigned roles of teacher and student, for they apply to everyone. Such an education by definition must include marginalized communities as subjects of study: immigrants, people of the LGBTQ community, women, men, old and young. In order to achieve this participatory and democratic education, we must build strong ties of solidarity between study and its subjects.

Solidarity is not built vertically, from the top down, but sideways. Embrace the one next to you and whisper into his or her ear that you affirm their existence, and that you will not abandon him or her. Let us intertwine our bodies as roots in a fertile soil that will bear the fruit of imagination and change. Paint our arms with landscapes of dignity and respect.

Don't just worry and stand by, occupy!

La Facultad de Humanidades es tuya, es de él, de ella, en fin es nuestra. Transformémosla en un espacio activo y dinámico de participación y colaboración. Modifiquemos la competencia y la ansiedad que el Estado y la administración fomentan, por la cooperación, la compasión y la alegría de la juventud. Las estructuras de poder comienzan a mostrar sus fisuras y sus metas anti-humanísticas; hoy y mañana serán días intensos de acción y de amor. Nuestras disciplinas peligran en las manos de los poderosos, re-tomémoslas como herramientas de liberación. Como humanistas podemos crear e imaginar mundos alternos, paralelos y posibles. Es tiempo ya de hacerlos realidad.

Ocupamos nuestra facultad para encontrarnos, para hacer a un lado todo intento de distanciarnos, de separarnos. Hemos decidido no morir sino destapar nuestras bocas para dejar saber que un mundo nuevo nació en nuestros corazones. Somos una multitud que piensa, reflexiona y critica, una generación cuyo palpitarse se arma por la interacción comprometida de un puño y un beso.

Esto no es una defensa de la Universidad, es una resignificación de la universidad: aquella que es horizontal, no jerárquica, participativa y democrática. Nuestra acción es un canto a la diversidad, a la pluralidad que constituye nuestro espacio educativo. Es un aria sobre los variados y ricos saberes que contribuyen a un mundo, un país, una ciudad, una multitud y un espacio diferente. La colorida melodía de la diferencia y el respeto, de la solidaridad y el amor, se hacen eco en los largos pasillos de nuestra facultad.

Somos hijas e hijos de la crisis y la marginalización, de un sistema económico que reprime y saquea. Somos descendientes de un sistema político que condena la participación y que decide de arriba hacia abajo. Pero, también somos herederos de una larga tradición de personas que abrieron camino para que los de hoy tengamos los derechos que tenemos, de multitudes que pagaron con sudor y sangre los beneficios que hoy nos quieren arrancar. Por ello re-tomamos la iupi y nuestra facultad, para que las y los de mañana tengan lo que hoy construimos: una multiplicidad de saberes, de perspectivas que les permitan analizar críticamente el mundo en el que viven y el mundo que pueden crear.

El fetiche numérico del Estado y la administración concibe la educación como una planta de producción de objetos de consumo. Como las humanidades no ofrecen ésto, buscan eliminarlas poco a poco. Lo que sí provee y ellos no valoran es la oportunidad de ser críticos, de reflexionar y cuestionar, de concebir mundos sonoros, pintorescos, performativos y letrados distintos al que tenemos. La educación no puede ser analizada por medio del lente de los vaivenes del mercado y los caprichos de la inversión capital. Ese tipo de educación solo genera sujetos dóciles e irreflexivos como autómatas mecanizados. ¡Rompamos la máquina!

Proponemos una educación digna y liberadora que genera mentes reflexivas y autónomas, una educación colaborativa entre profesores y estudiantes. Queremos una educación en la que participemos todos los sectores envueltos: los que enseñan y los que aprenden. No confundamos estos verbos con las identidades de profesor y estudiante, estos verbos apuntan a todos los sujetos envueltos porque el profesorado tanto enseña como aprende y de igual forma sucede con el estudiantado. Este tipo de educación conlleva la inclusión de subjetividades marginadas en los sujetos de estudio: inmigrantes, personas de la comunidad GLBTT, mujeres, hombres, viejos y jóvenes. Para lograr este tipo de educación participativa y democratizante construimos lazos de solidaridad entre saberes y entre sujetos.

La solidaridad no se construye de arriba hacia abajo sino hacia los lados. Abraza a quien tengas a tu lado y dile al oído que sabes que ella o él existe y que no le dejarás sola o solo. Enredemos nuestros cuerpos como raíces en un rico suelo cuyo fruto es la imaginación y el cambio. Pintemos nuestros brazos con paisajes de dignidad y respeto.

¡No te preocupes, ocúpate(te)!

Source: <http://occupyca.wordpress.com/2010/04/11/students-announce-occupation-of-the-university-of-puerto-rico/>

We Are Many Youth, But With One Struggle!

International Student Movement

A worldwide economic crisis exploded in 2008 that has been deeply consequential. This crisis can be only compared to the 1929 crisis. Powerfully striking at the core of the system, first it shook the United States and now it is developing more intensely in Europe. However, the effects of the crisis can be seen all over the world.

Governments have reacted the same way to the threat the crisis presents for their countries: make the youth and the workers pay for the crisis. They have allied with big business and banks that do not want decreased profits. Together, they elaborate plans of austerity that take away historical rights of the working class, result in layoffs, imposing work speed-ups and leave the youth without any possibility of a future.

The young of today, who are living the beginnings of this deep crisis, will experience as their reality living conditions even more difficult than those of previous generations. In the Arab world and in Europe, the rates of unemployment paint a terrifying picture, like in Spain where unemployment rates have surpassed 50%.

Among these, immigrants, women, and the black and LGBT community suffer even more, facing prejudice as a daily reality, the most precarious jobs and the lowest wages. This could be seen in 2010, with the revolt of black youth from the ghettos of London. They were treated by the international media and the government as marginals.

The economic crisis also has strong impact on education. Regardless of the disparity within each country, imperialism has launched an offensive on its quality and affordability at all levels of public education. Year after year governments cut education budgets, making it clear that for them education is not a priority. The consequences are precarious infrastructure and buildings, lack of teachers and professors, unqualified education workers, lack of student financial aid, etc. What has made the situation worse is the project for the universities that is being implemented today. It is one that transforms graduation courses into technological ones, destroying the basic mandate of teaching-research-extension, and all this while promoting an expansion of enrollment without any increase in funding. One consequence of this project is privatization, be it through direct collection of fees, be it by opening the universities to direct business control of laboratories and research.

It is imperative to defend high quality, public, free education as a right of every single person. We demand more funding for education, because this is the only way to make the democratization of access to education possible and to guarantee student financial aid, university dining halls, housing for students, child care centers, in addition to struggling for democratization of the internal decision-making processes. We must guarantee respect for university autonomy, that the decisions be taken by the entire academic community. With each confrontation with dictatorships and austerity plans,

the defense of public, high quality education is an essential demand of the youth ñ for an education that meets the needs and interests of the working class.

As we saw written on the signs in the Plaza del Sol, in Spain: if today our generation lacks education, jobs, housing, health security, our generation is one that also lacks fear. And we have demonstrated this fact in many heroic struggles across the globe. In the Middle East and North Africa, the youth has led a real revolution, overthrowing 30 year dictatorships that ruled through brutality and oppression and emerging as an example for the world. It has overthrown dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and is now facing a civil war in Syria. The occupation of Tahir Square for 18 days was a symbol for the new wave of struggle that has spread throughout the world. The method of occupying the squares has become a symbol of the new mobilizations.

Youth has also demonstrated its will and strength to fight and resist in Greece, Spain, England, Portugal, Italy, France. As the economic crisis is putting in jeopardy the future of the youth, we have taken to the streets, occupied plazas and universities, and faced down the repression and the governments. In the U.S., the Occupy Movement brought onto the scene major demonstrations in the center of the world, demonstrations not seen in decades. In Latin America, Chilean students pushed forward tremendous mobilizations, using a great deal of creativity and bravery, against the privatization of public education.

All these struggles faced much repression. Governments make an effort to silence by force the indignant shouts of youth, using any means necessary to do so. We've seen hundreds of killed and thousands of political prisoners, lots of bombs, tear gas, rubber bullets, lethal weapons. Despite this, the resistance grows.

We should learn from this moment of great clashes. First of all, the youth must have the organized working class as its strategic ally in struggle. We must raise up high the flag of worker-student unity, reviving the May '68 tradition and so many other moments in history. This creates the key combination of the youth's explosive energy and the experience and power of those who produce the wealth in our society. It was only through the forging of this alliance that was possible to overthrow dictatorships in the Arab world. It is not by chance that on the eve of the fall of Mubarak in Egypt there was a three day strike of workers at the Suez Canal. Only through this alliance will it be possible to defeat the plans of austerity and ensure that the workers and youth do not pay the price for the crisis.

Another lesson we must learn is that each struggle of students and the youth as a whole should serve the purpose of strengthening its organizations, in a democratic, independent way, united with the workers. And those organizations should have as one of their priorities creating international connections. Regardless of the uneven development in each country, of cultural differences, of the rhythm and expressions that the economic crisis will have, there is one thing we are sure of: there is a common reality our generation is facing. If

we are attacked as a whole, we must answer as a whole as well. We must establish strong bonds among youth organizations so we are in a better position to struggle and dream of a better future. With the combative spirit, will to fight and fearlessness, we invite all the organizations of students and the youth to take up this struggle.

We are many youth, but with one struggle!

WHEN an educational institution created to provide a truly public education for all defaults on this obligation, then it becomes the educator's duty to challenge the oppressive structure of the privatized university on a daily basis in order to rebuild the institution anew.

Let it be known:

California's Master Plan for an inclusive and equitable education has failed. As the majority of American families have fought to survive in harsh economic conditions, the University of California Regents and their super-wealthy donors have made themselves even richer at our expense. They have gambled our hard-earned money, patented our discoveries, and put the corporate interests above the needs of local communities. They have perpetuated a myth of market freedom that hides the realities of white supremacy, elitism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and imperialism. They have set the parameters of achievement around their corporate investments. They have turned knowledge into a commodity unavailable to working class communities and communities of color.

They have privatized our future.

For too long, they have dictated the pace of the university. They have set it to the mindless beat of the stock ticker. In the quarter system, our students are swept down a predetermined path, where they are bombarded by rapid bursts of information. The swift, uncompromising pace pressures educators to keep moving through the material rather than allowing students to pause and reflect critically either on the material itself or on its relevance to their daily lives. At the end of the quarter, we quantify student achievement within a rigid framework that privileges certain types of knowledge and promotes a type of shortsighted, goal-driven individualism that undermines collective work and meaningful forms of community. The quantifiable results are sent to administrators who evaluate our success and our students' achievement in mindless terms. They see neither the time nor the space for critical work. In this system it is best, for students and teachers, to move forward without asking questions.

We, a growing number of young educators at UCSD, refuse to remain complicit in this system. Our real work has been stalled and dulled down by their elitist parameters. At times, we despise ourselves for our complicity. At times, we feel ignorance would be an easier position. What remains consistent: the system feeds on our time, energy, and labor. It traps us in an oppressive logic, which we often come to accept as the natural order. In this way, it cuts off the possibility of strategic resistance.

On a daily basis, we feel the weight of this system. Our families and communities feel it. Yet, we continue to connect and fight and dream. Indeed, our dreams are born out of struggle. They are born from lived experiences, remembered stories, and unspeakable histories of trauma and loss. Our dreams are spoken from the margins, from the silences, from the shadows of history, but they have the capacity to shake the very foundations of power in the UC.

So with joy, we affirm our most important dream: **ANOTHER UNIVERSITY IS POSSIBLE!**

A liberatory UC, run by and for all the people, is not only possible—it is a critical part of a planetary youth movement that is enacting true democracy in public squares and parks. We have faith that the weapons at our disposal will allow us to play our part. We have faith that these weapons will allow us to peacefully tear down the old edifice and build this new university from the ground up. Our pedagogy is our main weapon, and on a daily basis, we see that it is neither blunt nor ineffective.

These are our main pedagogical principles—intuitions more than ideologies, bonds more than guidelines, dreams rather than demands. These principles aim at cracking through the crumbling structure of the university at its base. Through these principles, we will take part in a guerilla campaign to bring all of the people back into the university:

1. Our pedagogy is devised by and for the youth. Though we invite established scholars to join our movement, we have come to see that the central push for radical change must come from those at the bottom of the academic hierarchy. Our struggle cannot and will not be won by esteemed scholars or respectable educators; it will be won by the underpaid TA and the overworked adjunct faculty member. Side by side with our students, our struggle will be fought in the streets and in the classroom, in marches and in lecture. Together, we will fight to reclaim the university on our terms. Our word will be written on the board, stenciled on the public wall, articulated in the classroom and voiced on the street.

2. Our pedagogy does not recognize the degree or credential as the mark of the critical educator. To be a critical educator one does not need to have a degree, credential, or ladder-rank faculty position. We acknowledge that activist undergraduate students, labor organizers, community leaders, and artists are critical teachers. In most cases we find ourselves being taught and led by them. The words, family histories, and knowledge that they bring into our lives have become intertwined with our own. We hope to continue to move together. We hope to create this pedagogy together. Ours is a pedagogy from below, rooted in and fed by the real lives and real experiences of those we teach.

3. Our pedagogy is a real world pedagogy. Although corporate educators often claim that their classes are dedicated to “real world problems,” their teachings operate within a fantasy world that ignores the very concrete conditions and structural obstacles that their students and alumni navigate on a daily basis. Our pedagogy recognizes the contradictions and inequalities that organize our society in the present. Instead of ignoring these contradictions and naively hoping that they will magically disappear, we teach students to read the world as it truly is so that we can help to prepare them to operate within it. Our teaching responds to where we are, not where our society wants us to be.

4. Our pedagogy resists educational models that reward individualism, elitism, and selfishness. We recognize that such educational models undermine the possibilities for collective organizing and resistance by teaching students to think in terms of short-term, material objectives—the A, the corporate internship, the resume. The mass-production of debt-laden graduates who think in these terms serves corporate interests at the expense of the public good. To counter this corporate system of indenture, we introduce learning strategies that place the community over the individual, the relational above the singular, qualitative understandings over flat measurement, and collective participation over self-serving achievement. At times these methods will be cast as un-American, yet we believe that our lessons are guided by the most fundamental democratic principles: freedom, equality, and consensual participation.

5. We refuse to teach history in un-critical ways. We offer students complex views of history. We question historical viewpoints that buy into the past as proof that individualism, market freedom, and unfettered capitalism have led us down a straight path of progress. To reveal the contradictions of our country’s past, we focus on histories from the margins, on people who struggled to be recognized as human in inhuman political conditions. We teach these histories not as a multicultural novelty, but as the crucial bedrock of our history and as a prelude to our present. Because we are complicating the Disney narrative of history, students may come to see historical figures like JFK, Ronald Reagan and the so-called “Founding Fathers” in very different ways. These figures were real men with real flaws and, as such, they made real mistakes that impacted real people. We are educators, not cheerleaders for nationalism. Our job is not to indoctrinate students to blindly believe a fantasy version of our nation’s history. Our job is to teach students to understand our country’s past so that they can build a better future.

6. Our pedagogy will not constrain itself to one discipline. Departmental and disciplinary boundaries limit the scope of our work, fragment us, and discourage critical educators from finding allies across disciplines. In opposition to this divisive institutional framework, we pledge to share our disciplinary knowledge as a way of creating an intellectual environment that genuinely promotes an active, innovative engagement with concrete, real-world problems. Critical educators from the humanities will collaborate with critical scientists to critique racial and gender biases in the natural and hard sciences. Together, we will give all of our students the tools for questioning, articulating, and responding to oppressive structures in their future careers. We will also ensure that scientific research in the UC system will no longer be a commodity for the university and its corporate and military interest groups. We will struggle, hand in hand, to transform scientific research into a public good rather than a corporate commodity.

7. Our classrooms will be open and accessible to all. Financial barriers systematically deny working-class students, members of the staff, and students of color access to the intellectual resources of the university. Until the administration formally adopts policies that will secure equal access to a university education for all Californians, we refuse to recognize their authority to police access to our classrooms. Our labor as educators produces the education sold by the university, and we assert our right to set the terms and conditions of that production. This is not negotiable.

8. We will not operate on definitions of normalcy and ability that are privileged in the current university. Ours is a queer pedagogy. Ours is a pedagogy of various and differential abilities. Our goals and methods center on community rather than an individual body’s ability to achieve within normative and normalizing settings.

9. Our pedagogy centers on dialogue. Our pedagogy is not a method of indoctrination. We do not seek to impose knowledge on our students. It is political only in the sense that it encourages our students to participate in the struggle for a democratic education and democratic society. Our pedagogy revolves around community, knowledge sharing, and active listening. Through discussions with our students, we hope to teach and learn new ways of navigating the system, critiquing it, and coming up with collaborative and creative solutions to social problems. These dialogues bring into being communities that resist the oppressive corporate logic of the academy. They open up new horizons beyond a purely financial future. We realize that dialogues (unlike the easy answer delivered as a monologue) will not always be popular from the perspective of some students, peers, or directors. We are not so concerned with getting positive feedback on evaluations, since those markers of achievement often perpetuate a consumer model of learning. We have other markers of success that cannot be measured here and now.

10. We believe that our critical practices will create a necessary degree of tension in all of our students, even the most indoctrinated. We realize that our classroom conversations will make some students—and even many faculty members and co-workers—uncomfortable. We anticipate this tension because our knowledge lacks the full support of the elite who have turned the university into a business that prioritizes individual success and knowledge-hoarding above collective coexistence

and knowledge sharing. This tension is a good sign—a sign that we are doing something right in a corrupt setting. Although inspiring tension is not a goal in and of itself, it is a necessary step. This tension, which may inspire visceral reactions and backlash, is the first step toward a genuine liberation from oppressive ideologies. Our students' and peers' vexed reactions to critical practices, even if hostile, equate to a recognition of that which has previously gone unacknowledged in their field of vision. In these moments of tension, they begin to see other worlds and other words. They begin to perceive alternative ways of being in community as well as radical ways of seeing themselves as a product of collective historical struggles. Like adapting to a new prescription lens, the viewer needs time. We will encourage them to acknowledge this tension as a normal stage in coming into critical consciousness. We will come up with exercises and assignments that let them discover how deep this new lens allows them to see.

11. Our pedagogy decentralizes corporate authority in the classroom and re-centers the learning community. Older critical pedagogies disrupted educational models that privileged top-down structures within which the teacher was privileged as the single source of legitimate knowledge. We find that corporate interest, even more than the authority of the teacher, has become the central locus of power in our classrooms. Though we try to de-center our classrooms (while balancing our own social position within gender, racial, class and sexual hierarchies) an invisible pressure from above and beyond remains. The students stare past the teacher, focusing on standardized rules of success that allow them to consume the most knowledge in the shortest amount of time for the greatest quantifiable “return on investment.” The older banking model of education, discussed by critical educators, has evolved into a corporate investment model—our students are taught to see themselves as empty vessels to be filled up with mindless corporate strategies rather than knowledge. This investment model naturalizes and reproduces social, economic and political hierarchies by socializing students to accept their role as consuming subjects. It also socializes teachers to accept their role as bondsmen to the elites. Our pedagogy seeks to re-imagine the classroom as a space within which students can contest this investment model. We will open up spaces of knowledge sharing in which teachers and students reclaim their authority in collective terms. In our classrooms, students and teachers will meet in a space where they attempt to slow down time, open up a space of critique, and begin to consider deeper forms of investment in each other and in their dreams.

12. We believe in all of our students and place blame where blame is due. As bondsmen to the elite, we found ourselves displacing our frustrations in the most outrageous ways: We distrusted our students and blamed them for not understanding the critical terms. We became frustrated and angry when student responses kept reproducing the oppressive terms that neoliberal culture impressed upon them. We reacted by re-centering our authority in ways that parodied the disciplinarian and punitive models of the past. We have come to see that these reactions are misdirected. It is necessary to place blame where it is really due: not on the students but on the elites who have created and reinforced a corrupt educational system. They have created conditions that make it nearly impossible to understand the critical lexicon we have inherited from previous generations of critical educators and scholars. Over the past four decades, the elite have sought to consolidate their political, social, and ideological power by reinforcing a reactionary, patriarchal, white supremacist normative order that marks our critical thought as un-American or a relic of the past. By bombarding society with the idea that people working in academia are elitist and “out of touch,” the elite (through the vast network of corporate media that they own and control) have built up walls around many of our students. Our job is to tear down these walls without tearing down our students. Many young teachers believe they can go on with their own research, work with the students who “get it,” and disregard the others. This is a fallacy. An isolationist approach will do little to challenge the established educational order, and this failure will critically undermine the possibilities for both our students' and our futures: there will be no space for our research and fewer opportunities for the next generation of scholars, educators, and activists in the workplace. Instead of writing off the students who need our help most, we will recognize, critique, and disrupt the system that shapes all of our students. We will share novel tactics that challenge their assumptions and allow students to imagine a different, more liberatory future. We ask our fellow teachers to see where the blame is really due—not on the foot soldiers within the 99% but on the 1% that has led our students to think and act destructively.

13. Our pedagogy rejects and resists the militarization of universities and the incarceration of communities of color. The university-prison-military complex has established material conditions and educational standards that steer communities of color and working class communities into the prison or army. This is not a fantasy. It is a statistical reality. As communities of color are criminalized and subjected to state discipline, the State simultaneously defunds the educational and social programs that open up alternative possibilities for members of these communities. Even when students from these communities manage to make it to the university, the administration systematically underfunds and closes the programs most relevant to their lives and their continuing struggle—those that emphasize social justice and critical studies of history and culture. At the same time, the corporatized UC is intimately tied to the military industrial complex. We see this in the militarization of knowledge itself: The military, and corporations with military ties, fund anthropological and scientific research that is used as a weapon of warfare. We will counter this system in real ways: We will expose the carceral and military logic to our students. We will teach them to look at the hard data with critical eyes. We will extend our knowledge to the prison abolition movement and align ourselves with high school, elementary, and special education teachers who fight a daily battle to open up alternative paths for their students. We will teach in prisons and learn from prisoners. We will protest so-called “policy centers” and institutes that claim to produce scholarly research for the purpose of advancing U.S. interests,

while actually advocating neocolonial policies that benefit their corporate benefactors at the expense of marginalized communities. Researchers in these institutions amount to little more than intellectual mercenaries, and we will hold them publicly accountable for the violence they legitimize. In the most immediate sense, we will stand side by side with our students in peaceful protest to ensure that militarized police forces no longer get away with indiscriminate acts of violence on campus and in our communities. Through word and deed, we will ensure that this broken system cannot reproduce itself.

14. We recognize the crucial necessity of Ethnic Studies, Critical Race, and Critical Gender programs. Knowing the Chicano movement means knowing U.S. history. Knowing Stonewall means knowing U.S. history. Knowing the struggles of women of color and queers of color means knowing U.S. history. These struggles are a vital part of the education system at all levels, yet they face an immediate challenge: Over the last three years, critical programs have come under attack from entrenched white supremacists and wealthy elites who want to maintain their place at the top of a social and economic hierarchy. This backlash is the last stand of the 1% in a state where much of the 99% happens to be Chicana/o, Latina/o or Mexican-American. The ban on ethnic studies programs in Arizona is a blatant example of a privileged few manipulating the legal system to retain their control. As such, it is an attack on everyone fighting for justice and equality across the nation. It is an attack on our collective history. Thus, we refuse to acknowledge the legality of this oppressive law. The ban is a flagrant display of white supremacy, class warfare, and a war against all of Arizona's youth. We see our struggle to reclaim the public university reflected in the struggle of Raza Studies students and teachers fighting to preserve an educational program that advances the needs of their communities in clear and measurable ways. We align our teaching with their critical pedagogies. These teachers do not indoctrinate, rather they give students the tools to struggle for a more just and equitable democracy. We recognize that the people who have banned their programs are led by a callow fear of difference and change. They call a curriculum "un-American" because it teaches students to locate their stories in the diversity of narratives that make up our country's history. According to their perverse doctrine, students who think differently are students who hate. We, however, have a very different view of our nation's youth. Our pedagogy reclaims the term "American"—there is nothing patriotic about willful ignorance—and honors the on-going struggle of the Raza Studies programs in Arizona. These critical teachers and students have fought a long and tiring battle against racist politicians and corporate bureaucrats that hide behind post-race rhetoric as a way of maintaining their social position. To the Arizona teachers: Our pedagogy aims at raising immediate consciousness about your predicament. We are in solidarity with your cause. We pledge our support. Your dream has not failed. It pushes us onward.

15. When pushed into teaching in uncritical programs, we will teach their "depoliticized" material in critical ways. Our capacity to teach students to think critically is not dependent upon the texts that we teach, but rather the questions that we pose. When teaching canonical texts in traditional programs, we will push students to recognize the class, race, gender and sexual biases in ostensibly "objective" and "apolitical" forms of knowledge. We recognize that casting certain types of knowledge as "not political" or "objective" is itself a deeply political act; those who make this claim actually reaffirm one of the founding myths of a corporate education—that knowledge can be produced in a vacuum, and that all students have equal, objective access to the same ways of knowing. While critical programs provide crucial spaces for openly deconstructing this myth, these discussions can and will occur outside these programs. Our pedagogical practices disrupt and challenge the logic of the corporate educational model by making crucial connections between the material that we teach and the structures of power that shape them.

16. We will push back against lecturers and programs that have invested in the oppressive corporate regime. When we are placed in assistant roles to elitist instructors within the university, we will operate in ways that undermine their dangerous and damaging lectures. Unlike these teachers, we will not assist in the perpetuation of an inequitable social order. We will not be the tools of the ruling class. We will teach students to unlearn the racist, classist, sexist, or homophobic ideologies that have bombarded them for the first decades of their lives. Along these same lines, many programs falsely claim to serve critical purposes. In practice, they reproduce the very hierarchies that they are supposed to critique. We will not be faithful to programs that are not faithful to themselves. Rather than criticizing these programs from the outside, we will infiltrate these programs and invest the time and energy necessary to bring critical educators into leadership and faculty positions. In strategically covert (and sometimes overt) ways, we will work against directors who impose on students a curriculum that amounts to little more than training for the corporate world. While we would prefer to work with such directors to develop critical curricula, in many cases directors are more concerned with retaining their privileged position in the university than addressing the potential consequences of their corporate pedagogical models. When directors and administrators consistently prevent real, concrete change in order to protect their personal interests, we will organize to bring about their removal. This, however, is a last resort. We do not enjoy scorched earth tactics. Nevertheless, we recognize the necessity of burning a barren field in order to sow the seeds of intellectual liberation. Ours is not a pedagogy of good intentions; ours is a pedagogy of concrete action. Our labor will not be acknowledged in a line on our CV or through institutional accolades; the only true record of our efforts will be written in our hearts and in our students' praxis. We recognize that the time and energy we spend revitalizing these programs will not change the system overnight. We plant the seeds of change and work for the conditions that will allow that change to flourish.

17. We will ally ourselves with truly critical educators inside and outside the university. We will form underground coalitions and networks with young people who have taken up common cause in different universities. We will support one another and work to destabilize institutional power structures. After we graduate, we will maintain contact with instructors and students still actively undermining the UC system from within, thus creating a national and potentially global network of allies.

18. We will break the walls that separate the ivory tower from our communities. A true education empowers marginalized groups to recognize and tear down the social structures underlying their exploitation. This is why the privileged seek to exclude minorities and working-class students from the university, and this is why we seek to restructure the university in ways that emphasize connections between spaces of learning and spaces of struggle. With that goal in mind, we will steal knowledge from the colonized academy and circulate it back to our students and members of the community in ways that effect practical change. This process will not dull down the theoretical tools we gain from academia; rather, it will make them sharper. Participating in active resistance movements provides unique insights and analytical tools that academia cannot and should not ignore. Although we reject any attempt to completely isolate the two, we also reject any attempt by academics to appropriate or speak for the communities and experiences where that knowledge derives. We can only achieve our goals by sharing our knowledge and strategies of resistance with potential allies beyond the university. At the same time, we acknowledge that we have everything to gain from community-based theories, practices, and activism enacted by people outside the university, including our most marginalized brothers and sister who push back against injustice on a day-to-day basis.

19. We will use all the media, technology, and art at our disposal to make the university's hidden injustices visible. The university's power depends upon the invisibility of its domination. Whereas earlier oppressions relied on blatant tactics of terror—lynching, imprisonment, militarized crowd control—the present administrative regime employs covert corporate methods to consolidate its power over the student body, faculty and staff. These methods include denying educational access and employment to marginalized groups, channeling funding into disciplines that reflect the interests of the 1% at the expense of disciplines that address racial, class, gender and sexual issues, and manipulating legal authorities to criminalize intellectual freedom. This university is corrupt and we will use the technologies at our disposal to document and publicize its offenses. By making its trespasses known, we will hold the university accountable to the public.

20. At times, we will remain anonymous. When necessary, we will wear our masks. We have no interest in becoming political martyrs or symbols of resistance. We see no use in being fired from teaching positions that already exploit our labor. Our goal is to enact pedagogies that will transform our students and our society. In turn, the process will transform us. The most effective way to do so is by undermining the system from within. The university depends upon our labor to perform an image of inclusivity and tolerance to mask the underlying corruption and exploitation at the heart of the system, but by applying our labor in subversive ways we will open up cracks in this exploitative, exclusionary system whenever and wherever possible. By making enough cracks, we will bring down the façade and begin building a truly inclusive and liberatory university.

21. We invoke imagination as a crucial site of resistance. Our pedagogy is fundamentally constructive. Instead of the disciplinary and prescriptive educational models that often dominate our universities, our classrooms foster creativity, collaboration and hope. By teaching our students to recognize the forms of domination that limit their present, we provide our students with the tools to imagine and create radically different futures. In and through these acts of creative resistance, our students open up new horizons of possibility and enact a politics of hope that both resists and acknowledges present conditions.

22. Our pedagogy is adaptive and inclusive. We realize that in order to be strategic, these principles must continually adjust and readjust to a system that sees our pedagogy as misguided and untimely. As budget cuts decimate the number of administrators and managers employed by the university, crucial cracks in the university's surveillance and disciplinary apparatus are produced. We will look for, and exploit, every crack and fissure in the walls of the university. The administration will try to fragment us, but we will continually adapt our methods to the changing institutional landscape. We also recognize that in order to be inclusive we cannot assume that these principles speak for everyone. We only hope that our first attempts at outlining our dreams will speak to your own. To this end, we invite educators working in institutions across the country to join us in enacting and adapting these principles.

We affirm these principles as **THE PEDAGOGY FOR OUR FUTURE**, principles we enact each day henceforward. These principles mark a beginning not an end. They guide our moves in and beyond the classroom. They are marked with the radical power of love—love of family, love of our students, and love of our communities. Our love is expressed through concrete actions rather than abstract self-sacrifice, and for that reason it will be cast by some as militant or divisive. We are guided by our commitment to real people. Our success is not measurable within current educational standards. We do not seek recognition or rewards in our lifetime. Our daily struggles are fed not by grants or by evaluations but by the energy of students, our allies, and those who have been barred from entry. In practical and theoretical ways, they sustain us in our most important struggle within the academy.

In articulating these principles, we have relied on the future tense. This tense is the grammar of our dreams. Yet, in this pedagogical revolution what “will be” is tied back to what “was” and what “could have been” if conditions had been different. Our struggles for the future connect to those lost lives and histories that cannot be redeemed in our fight. Our dreams are haunted by the exploited and marginalized dead, some of whom are our partners, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers, and other non-blood kin that the system has made unmentionable. Their ghosts drive us toward the future.

The future tense is the grammar of our dreams. Yet, the dream of the future also structures our present praxis: We are sustained by the possibility of another university, which unlike a mirage or beacon in the distance, flickers into reality in the space we teach in and take back every day.

Our dreams are the continuation of multiple, intersecting histories of resistance. These histories are most easily locatable in the recorded words and deeds of radical educators such as Emma Goldman, César Chávez, Comandante Ramona, Dolores Huerta, Paulo Freire, Jaime Escalante, Angela Davis, Yuri Kochiyama and Gloria Anzaldúa, but our struggle is more closely aligned with those whose names and stories will never be found in any archive. In the decades-long battle for the public university, we see ourselves as the kin of those unrecognized students, teachers, and mentors who have fought long and hard struggles for a liberatory education. Their fire was never lost, even in apparent moments of defeat—it still burns and crackles in our dreams and guides us in our waking lives.

Our mad-dreams arise like wisps of smoke: We dream of a university where the means of knowledge production are restored to the people. We dream of a public good given back to the public. Our errant dreams and deeds will take back the university. Our dreams will steal into the peaceful sleep of those administrators and bureaucrats who currently occupy the seat of control. We, the ones they have pushed below, will become their nightmares. And, just like a nightmare, our names and faces will disappear as soon as they awake.

There is smoke on the horizon, signals that some have mistaken as chaos. Do not be mistaken. The global occupations are the signs that we, who have always been here, are emerging with new force. We—the people of color, the exploited whites, the queers and those with radically different abilities—have emerged onto the stage of history. We, the youth, will carry the fire.

Will you dream these dreams with us? Will you carry this fire with us?

If so, look for us to the bottom and left of the university—the space of dreams and the space where revolutionary pedagogy begins. We will find each other there in due time. We will find our voice there. There, in the space of the heart, we will shout our call and hear those words amplified back to us:

THEY STOLE OUR DREAMS! WE WANT THEM BACK!

THEY STOLE OUR FUTURE! WE TAKE IT BACK!

In solidarity and hope,
The University Liberation Front

smartAction Intro



An art exhibition inspired by the 2010 - 2011 University of Puerto Rico student movement.

Una exposición de obras artísticas inspiradas en el movimiento estudiantil de la Universidad de Puerto Rico 2010 - 2011.



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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Papel Machete, *Untitled (Wooden Shield)*, 2010; Isamar Abreu, *La UPR no se vende*, 2011; Michelle Martinez Rosario "Aquarela", *Represión Policiaca*, 2011; Javier Maldonado, *9 de febrero de 2011*, 2011.



LA PERFORMATIVIDAD COLECTIVA COMO ARTE PÚBLICO

Acción dentro de la Huelga de la Universidad de Puerto Rico

Por: Edén Bastida Kuliick

Introducción

Conocemos lo ambiguo que significa definir el arte público y las diversas variedades conceptuales que se utilizan para clasificarlo. Para realizarlo se puede partir desde el ámbito espacial donde se desarrolla, hasta la implicación que puede existir con cierta comunidad en particular. Las posiciones son diversas al tratar de englobar manifestaciones de lo que se podría considerar arte público.

Llegué a Puerto Rico con el afán de ver las manifestaciones artísticas que podrían encapsularse en el espectro tan amplio de lo que se puede denominar arte público. Para tal objetivo, tratamos de indagar en la concepción que se tiene del espacio público que de por sí es ya demasiado compleja y ambigua.

Lo que primordialmente me incentivó a realizar la presente investigación fue la situación socio-política tan peculiar de esta isla tan "pequeña"¹. Tener un status que para la población no resulta sencillo explicar: "Somos parte pero no tanto"...algo así.... Somos un Estado Libre y Asociado. ¿Libre de qué? ¿Asociado a quién? ¿En qué consiste y como se sobrelleva esa relación de Libertad y Asociatividad con los Estados Unidos?

Para intentar comprender las dinámicas y relaciones sociales y, en consecuencia, la situación política de esta isla, consideré que un primer ejercicio válido y necesario sería vivenciar la calle; es decir, intentar percibir el desarrollo y las nociones de espacio público. Considero que esa mezcla de por un lado seguir siendo colonia norteamericana (como la considera la misma ONU)² y, por otro lado, tener la esencia de un país latinoamericano solo lleva a realizarme demasiadas preguntas y tener muy pocas respuestas.

Al observar las diferentes manifestaciones artísticas que se desarrollan en San Juan, se observa claramente un arte enfocado en el espacio público. Encontramos que la mayoría del arte público que se desarrolla en San Juan es lo que Lucy Lippard denomina *plunk art*³ (el arte público tradicional de exteriores) que simplemente agranda el tamaño de las piezas y se pone en el emplazamiento para después montarlas igualmente en las galerías. Dicho tipo de arte conceptualiza el espacio público como un lugar transitorio para la pieza artística antes de llegar a la galería, muchas veces su objetivo real. Como ejemplo podemos citar la obra de Isabel Ramírez Pagan, quien diseña unas especies de bancas de madera y las instala en plazas públicas o en lugares abandonados. Después de ese viaje por los exteriores citadinos, la obra se expone en recintos artísticos. Otro ejemplo interesante en este sentido es la obra Chemi Rosado, que instala un trampolín en una zona cercana al puente "dos hermanos", donde normalmente se reúnen grupos de jóvenes a saltar sobre la laguna; en este tipo de ejemplo aplicaría la idea de utilidad en el arte público, pues la pieza artística sirve momentáneamente para cierta actividad de

convivencia y diálogo. Estos dos ejemplos van por la línea de intentar mediante objetos estéticos producir un intercambio social en el espacio público y que posteriormente dicha pieza o registro de la misma recaiga en museos o galerías.

Por otro lado, en San Juan se observa gran cantidad de graffitis tapizando la ciudad ya que existen colectivos y artistas con una propuesta plástica muy clara. Como ejemplos podríamos mencionar a La Pandilla, Hello Again, Sofía Maldonado y otros muchos a quienes se les prestan fachadas o se les contrata para "decorar" muros y paredes citadinas. Esta actividad tan en boga en San Juan la consideraría murales callejeros. Desde mi opinión para ser considerado graffiti se necesita operar con cierta dosis de ilegalidad; porque si no simplemente se toma el lenguaje grafftero para la creación de murales como sucede en estos casos. Creo que por más que la destreza plástica de estos murales sea innegable, los mismos no actúan como vehículo identitario del lugar donde se pintan, ni plasman una postura clara respecto al espacio público.

Percibo que en la noción de espacio público en Puerto Rico siempre está la noción de individualidad; escucho hablar de él como un ente preciso y de circulación personal. Es un ente de tránsito más que de diálogo. Por el espacio público se circula de un espacio privado o mercantil a otro y así sucesivamente.

De tal forma, las calles no funcionan como un espacio de encuentro, no se articula diálogo social en ellas. Las ideas o pretextos sobre por qué no se contempla el espacio público de esta manera son tan variados que sorprenden. Se argumenta que esto no se da por las incomodidades que implica adentrarse en el espacio público, igualmente se pone en muchas ocasiones como excusa el clima: "el calor es denso e insopportable. Ante eso mejor irnos a Plaza"⁴ (Plaza Las Américas), un mall gigantesco: "El centro comercial más grande del Caribe", como mencionan orgullosos. Sería interesante adentrarse en otros puntos tropicales para ver cómo es el desenvolvimiento y las nociónes que se tienen de espacio público.

Por lo tanto, la "calle" en Puerto Rico es un concepto demasiado nebuloso al analizar el arte público porque en él se perciben fuertemente todos los procesos de experimentación de la cultura y el poder, los cuales están destinados a mantener a la población fuera de la calle. Se intenta mantener a todo el mundo dentro de casa o en lugares controlados. La interacción social se complejiza rotundamente y la organización social vive un proceso lento y contemplativo.

a) Comida para Perros: el arte público no conceptualizado como tal.

En el mes de abril de 2010, la Universidad de Puerto Rico vivió un momento de fuerte convulsión política debido a una serie de medidas (El Nuevo Plan) y ajustes presupuestarios que intentaba hacer la administración universitaria. Los

acontecimientos llevan a que los estudiantes pidan justificación ante estos movimientos presupuestales. Al no obtener una respuesta clara y válida por parte de la administración, el estudiantado se organizó y se iniciaron una serie de protestas que generaron una huelga general que duró aproximadamente dos meses.

El punto en el que me voy a concentrar en este ensayo tiene que ver con las manifestaciones artísticas que surgieron a raíz del estallido huelgario. Estas, desde nuestra perspectiva, pueden entrar fácilmente en lo que se denomina arte público, sean asumidas como prácticas artísticas o no, porque activan en gran medida la calle como lugar de diálogo y espacio de relaciones. Aquí hay que tener en cuenta la situación colonial de Puerto Rico y la pasividad de la gran mayoría de la población ante los eventos de índole político. Por lo tanto, estas piezas surgieron como un arte de la inmediatez.

Hal Foster postula que "El arte debe intervenir directamente en el ámbito de la cultura -entendiendo cultura como un lugar de conflicto y de contestación permanente- por lo que se deben analizar los sistemas y aparatos que controlan las representaciones culturales, realizando prácticas que busquen transformar y contestar los sistemas de control de la producción simbólica y de circulación de los procesos de significación"⁵. Igualmente se debe intentar que estas prácticas consigan una efectividad material para así evitar convertirse en intervenciones re-apropiadas y re-codificadas dentro del gran espacio ideológico de dominación.

Las obras visuales y performativas que surgieron desde el primer momento del estallido de la Huelga fueron numerosas. Se podían observar constantemente, en las calles que circundan el recinto universitario, distintos tipos de manifestaciones artísticas de índole interdisciplinario que iban desde la gráfca y la pintura hasta acciones performáticas. Estas tenían como único propósito apoyar a los estudiantes que se mantenían en pie de lucha dentro de las instalaciones universitarias en contra de la administración de la Universidad de Puerto Rico; la calle era restablecida entonces como espacio generador de conciencia colectiva.

Los Payapolicias, El Colectivo Papel Machete, Agua, Sol y Sereno, Jóvenes del 98, Sembrando Conciencias y otros colectivos artísticos, así como la misma sociedad civil que asistía cotidianamente a las afueras del recinto universitario revivieron el espacio de experimentación artística. Lograron convertir la calle en ese ente aspiracional de cualquier sociedad en donde la gente crea continuamente; lograron dialogar y establecer una protesta directa contra un asunto de incumbencia nacional. No era un asunto de una minoría, como vociferaba la autoridad universitaria argumentando que se trataba de unos cuantos jóvenes parásitos que no tenían de nada de qué quejarse porque no estudiaban, no trabajaban y vivían del estado benefactor estadounidense.

Aun con las muy diversas manifestaciones artísticas que nacieron a raíz de la Huelga, en el presente ensayo me gustaría concentrarme en la relación que se logró entre el performance y la esfera pública; cómo, en este caso puntual, los estudiantes huelguistas y la misma sociedad civil que apoyaba su causa se apropiaron de códigos artísticos para establecer un diálogo puntual sobre el acontecer de la lucha universitaria, cómo se vivencia el espacio público en general en esta nación colonizada. Se marcó la diferencia con la visión tradicional de una pieza performática que constituye una obra temporal hecha principalmente por artistas plásticos. En dichas piezas casi siempre es ejecutada por un artista de manera individual y

tiende a la producción de eventos y no de objetos; la pieza acá analizada va más por la línea de una acción colectiva sin pretensión artística alguna, con el único objetivo de protestar ante un acontecimiento represivo. Vimos al performance como forma de expresividad que se actualiza en un espacio público y que tiene como objetivo cuestionar las prácticas o símbolos que estructuran la vida comunitaria. ⁶

Sé que el performance surge en los años 60s en medio de una tremenda convulsión de índole social y político. Por ello se convierte en una herramienta de contestación directa a los procesos sociales que se vivían, así como de desprecio al mercado del arte y al objeto artístico como producto comercial. Al producir acciones en lugar del típico objeto artístico, propiciaba que no se pudiera comercializar y por lo tanto no sería del interés del business institucional. Ahora bien, el performance colectivo que analizaremos va por otra línea ideológica, podríamos decir, porque no está contemplado en ningún momento como pieza artística, y mucho menos sujeta a introducirse en el mercado del arte.

Con este tipo de performances colectivos podemos observar la posibilidad de que los sujetos se apropien de los espacios vacíos que la hegemonía aún no puede conquistar; así mismo, contempla la esfera pública no como una dimensión estática, más bien el rol de la sociedad civil por generar un espacio de producción crítica de opinión popular ⁷ La Huelga avanzaba mientras tenían lugar los últimos latidos del mes de abril. Un día, como tantos otros dentro de esta lucha, un grupo de padres de familia y de artistas se acercaron al portón principal del recinto universitario -que estaba cercado por la policía antimotines- con el afán de entregarles alimentos y víveres a los estudiantes agrupados dentro del campus universitario. Los padres de familia se acercaban al barandal para pasar los alimentos hacia el interior de la Universidad, donde los estudiantes lo recibirían. La reacción policiaca ante estos hechos fue violenta: se impidió a los padres pasar los alimentos a sus hijos, llegando incluso al grado de golpear a uno de ellos.

Al día siguiente de este acontecimiento, un grupo de personas llegaron hasta el portón principal que seguía siendo resguardado por la policía y empezaron a poner platos de comida para perros debajo de cada uno de los policías que resguardaban el plantel universitario. Posteriormente pasaban con un gran costal de alimento canino e iban colocando la comida en cada uno de los platos. Luego ubicaron al lado de los uniformados varios letreros que decían "cuidado con el perro". Esta acción que nació de forma espontánea un día después del acontecimiento en el que la policía impidió el paso de alimentos para los estudiantes, demuestra claramente una renovación del estilo del performance: un grupo de gente, que no eran identificados, ni trataban de serlo, ejercían una acción con fuerte carga de protesta ante lo ocurrido el día anterior. La acción creativa buscaba articular los signos políticos dentro de la calle y que tanto lo cultural como lo artístico que tiene dicha pieza se conviertan en una herramienta contestataria, en un dispositivo político que use de forma hábil signos de la vida cotidiana para generar nuevos significados sociales. Se trata, pues, de una pieza que asume a las representaciones y a los significados

de la vida cotidiana como elementos culturales y constitutivos de la nueva hegemonía por conquistarse. ⁸

Esta pieza, de fecha 27 de abril de 2010, era sumamente clara en el manejo de símbolos. Se manejaba la simbología con el objetivo de transformar el imaginario oficial de los elementos del Estado (en este caso la policía). Su creación partía de un simbolismo claramente identificable: el alimento que le fue negado a los estudiantes. En este caso no solamente no se negaba, sino que se servía "A esos animales de dos patas".

Desde mi punto de vista, esa acción colectiva tan rudimentaria de dar de comer a alguien que un día atrás les negó el alimento, es un fuerte golpe ideológico, por más que como se manejó en la prensa y en la misma sociedad puertorriqueña "se paso de la raya"⁹ y más en esta sociedad en donde el respeto al servidor público aún está muy presente, y donde "la policía merece respeto, como sujeto que nos brinda seguridad" ¹⁰. Lo que en otro lugar del mundo pudiera haber sido un ataque más directo tanto verbal como físico contra las fuerzas represivas del estado, en este punto geográfico se actuó con una sutileza ejemplar, sin desmembrar el fuerte mensaje de oposición a dicha corporación y a lo que representa.

Este performance puso de manifiesto las conexiones entre la vida cotidiana y política con elementos muy simples y comunes; demostró que la construcción de un nuevo sujeto bien podría partir de una radical interpretación simbólica. Se logró la creación de una acción que intentó mover la conciencia colectiva de la nación a partir de una acción simple como es el hecho de dar de comer alimento de perros a unos policías.

Por otro lado, esta acción convirtió a la esfera pública en un espacio de interacción de la sociedad civil mediante el cual se manifestó claramente contra un hecho represivo; como era de carácter participativo, su fin no era la producción de objetos ni la elaboración de registro como sucede muchas veces en el arte de protesta. A través de la acción se intentaba generar lo que podríamos llamar un "efecto de espejo" (nos hicieron, les hacemos), así como demostrar la fuerte indignación de la sociedad civil ante el acto represivo policial del día anterior.

Estas nuevas formas de protesta son necesarias y no se trata solo de generar revuelta social sino, sobre todo, de comenzar a producir un sentido alternativo de acción ¹¹. El hecho vino a reinventar creativamente la protesta construyendo estrategias político- artísticas distintas a las existentes y rehaciendo el camino paso a paso. La idea sería entonces que los protagonistas logren de una forma u otra politizar artísticamente el espacio público, como espacio de sociabilidad y como lugar constructor de consensos para la acción. Hay que buscar mecanismos distintos para plantear el cambio social de una forma más fuida. Esto puede lograrse mediante pequeños acontecimientos que inspiren a pequeños grupos y se conviertan en grandes eventos que provoquen grandes cambios. ¹²

Es claro que el valor de este performance parte de la desobediencia simbólica frente al mundo oficial, como en la intensidad metafórica que sus signos consiguieron articular en los imaginarios colectivos. Estas acciones ya no son obras:

viven un proceso de creación-desmembramiento en cuanto al individuo creador porque no tienen autores definidos y la esencia de la obra pasa a ser las interacciones personales que se dieron a raíz de la acción.

b) La ilegalidad en los procesos artísticos

La acción descrita con anterioridad tocaba, para muchas personas, signos de ilegalidad porque, por un lado, existía una obstrucción al paso dentro del espacio público, es decir, el famoso "corte de ruta"; y por el otro, existía una ofensa o insulto directo al servidor público: la fuerza policiaca, en este caso. Ante este asunto retomo las palabras de John Cage que definía el arte como un acto criminal, el arte como delito grave. Como actividad delictiva, la obra de arte puede demostrar que el gobierno no tiene razón de ser ¹³. En este caso puntual, con la policía sucede exactamente lo mismo; aparte de que no cumple con su labor, reprime e imposibilita acciones puntuales.

La problemática por superar con estas piezas artísticas de génesis contestataria es que normalmente terminan encapsuladas dentro del palacio artístico (los museos). Allí su fuerza radical se diluye lentamente. La obra de arte, al romper la ley, prueba que las entidades estatales se vuelven totalmente innecesarias y que pueden ser destruidas. Pero, como menciona Nelson Rivera, esa labor de destrucción le corresponde a la sociedad civil en su conjunto, no a un grupo de artistas ¹⁴.

Oscar Ianni ¹⁵ menciona que el acto de violar la ley en Puerto Rico es un acontecimiento más que cotidiano. Lo llama "violencia horizontal" y pone como ejemplos diversas acciones del diario vivir: gritar mientras uno conduce un automóvil, cruzarse semáforos mientras se maneja. Hay ejemplos más extremos como el hecho de arreglar cuentas entre pandillas mediante asesinatos. Coincido con esta postura de Ianni en cuanto a que es cierto que existen procesos de violación de los marcos legales en muchas ocasiones, pero dichas acciones normalmente se dan entre ciudadanos, delitos en los que no interviene el Estado directamente, sino solo de manera abstracta (al imponer las leyes de convivencia).

Considero que la confrontación del ciudadano con el Estado se da de forma muy blanda, no existe un concepto de la ilegalidad en cuanto al choque de ideas con lo que representa el Estado y sus instituciones, el ciudadano tiene un temor fuerte a retar directamente a la institución estatal.

Esto sucede aun cuando las gestas de liberación o acciones de protesta más famosas en Puerto Rico han sido eventos con fuerte carga artística; el tiroteo al Congreso de los Estados Unidos en 1954 y la toma de la estatua de la libertad en 1977. En Puerto Rico se viola la ley como se hace arte. ¹⁶

Como justificación directa de la obra en cuanto a la violación de las leyes, traigo las palabras del prócer nacionalista puertorriqueño Pedro Albizu: "violar la ley del imperio es cumplir la ley de la patria". Por lo tanto, la situación colonial de esta isla y la pasividad colectiva de la población, así como su nula concepción del término ilegalidad ante la

confrontación directa con el Estado hace que la pieza artística comentada sea altamente sugestiva y retante.

c) La espontaneidad en el surgimiento de manifestaciones artísticas.

Un punto crucial en la concepción de esta pieza artística y los procesos de creación del arte público contestatario tiene que ver con la espontaneidad en la creación del evento performático. Es decir, cualquier agrupación sin importar el sector social, sea o no artista, puede expresarse de forma totalmente espontánea.

La espontaneidad será siempre resultado tanto de intereses artísticos individuales o procesos creativos reprimidos como consecuencia de diversos procesos sociales, culturales, políticos o económicos. Entra aquí la idea de Antonio Gramsci quién sostenía que nunca en la historia se da la espontaneidad pura porque esta coincidiría con la mecanicidad "pura" ¹⁷. Siempre depende de un sinnúmero de factores que facilitarán la gestación de esos procesos espontáneos; sin embargo, se tiene la "limitante" de que muchas de esas manifestaciones o acciones no dejan documentación identificable.

Ante lo anterior, basándonos en Antonio Negri, mencionamos que "la espontaneidad no es un hecho negativo; al contrario, es el resultado de experiencias y luchas pasadas, inteligencia que se hace cuerpo y voluntad" ¹⁸

Conclusión

Una vez entendido este fenómeno y dejando clara nuestra postura en torno a que constituye el paso final, capaz y el más determinante en el proceso de solidificación de un arte público horizontal, nos remitiremos al significado etimológico de la palabra espontáneo. Esto nos ayuda a cerrar la idea respecto a la necesidad de presencia en los procesos organizativos de este tipo de arte. Espontáneo viene del latín *sponte*, que significa que se hace libre o voluntariamente sin causa externa. He aquí cuando el arte encuentra uno de sus tantos objetivos: ser vehículo de libertad, que los individuos logren satisfacer sus necesidades basándose en las concepciones morales que cada uno tenga, que no existan dictámenes que regulen los comportamientos del hombre, que los acuerdos se realicen de forma colectiva.

Algunas expresiones que se engloban en la idea que manejamos de espontaneidad en el arte público son expresiones de "arte fugaz", "intervenciones efímeras" en espacios públicos en donde se opera de manera colectiva y espontánea. Normalmente estas expresiones se dan periféricamente a los circuitos de arte, tienen que ver más con expresiones colectivas o respuestas ciudadanas ante ciertos sucesos.

Dichas obras, creemos, tienen la necesidad de ser acciones temporales, breves, pero frecuentes. Buscan hacer visibles situaciones sociales concretas y servir al mismo tiempo de detonador de una actuación solidaria colectiva. Duque es claro al mencionar que dichas acciones deben tener una fuerte dosis de agresividad y sarcasmo para que realmente se conviertan en

un antídoto y lleguen eficazmente a todas las capas de la población.¹⁹

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Notas

1. **Somos una isla tan pequeña ", repite en diversas frases la población puertorriqueña.**
2. **Comité de Descolonización de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas.**

3. LIPPARD LUCY. "Mirando alrededor: dónde estamos y donde podríamos estar" Del texto Modos de hacer. Arte crítico, esfera pública y acción directa. Editores: Paloma Blanco, Jesús Carrillo. Jordi Claramonte y Marcelo Expósito. Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca. España, 2001.
4. Palabras de Vecina del barrio de Miramar en Santurce.
5. FOSTER HAL. Recodings, Art, Spectacle and Culture Politics. Seattle: Bay Press 1986.
6. DIAMOND, ELIN. Performance and Cultural Politics. Routledge, Londres, 1996.
7. ARATO, ANDREW y COHEN, JEAN. Esfera pública y sociedad civil en Metapolítica, vol. 3, No 9. 1999. pp. 37
8. DAGNINO, EVELINA. Cultura, ciudadanía y democracia: los nuevos discursos y prácticas cambiantes de la izquierda latinoamericana en Arturo Escobar, Sonia Álvarez y Evelina Dagnino Política cultural y cultura política. Una mirada sobre los movimientos sociales latinoamericanos Taurus, Madrid, 2001. pp.57.
9. Se exageró o se pasó del límite de lo contestatario.
10. Frase fuertemente escuchada por la población.
11. REVILLA, MARISA. El concepto de movimiento social: acción, identidad y sentido en Instituciones políticas y sociedad. Grompone, Romeo (editor). IEP, Lima, 1995.
12. Palabras de JORDAN JOHN. Miembro de colectivo Reclaim the Streets dentro del programa "Metropolis" capítulo: Arte y Activismo Social. Televisión Española. 2010.
13. Citado en: RIVERA NELSON. Puerto Rico: performance y violencia, arte y criminalidad Publicado dentro de Saqueos: Antología de producción cultural de Dorián Lugo. Editorial noexiste, Puerto Rico, 2002.
14. RIVERA, NELSON. op, cit.,
15. citado en: RIVERA ,NELSON. op, cit.,
16. RIVERA, NELSON. op, cit.,
17. GRAMSCI, ANTONIO. Escritos políticos, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires, 1977. pp. 327
18. NEGRI, ANTONIO. El poder constituyente. Libertarias, Madrid, 1994. pp. 361
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COLLECTIVE PERFORMANCE AS PUBLIC ART Action inside the University of Puerto Rico's Strike

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Introduction

We already know about the ambiguity behind trying to define public art and the diverse conceptual varieties used to classify it. To do this one could start with the spatial scope in which it develops, to the implications it has for some community in particular. There are many points of view when trying to generalize manifestations on what could be considered "public art". I went to Puerto Rico eager to see the artistic manifestations that could pertain to the wide scope of public art. Thus, I tried to inquire about the conception of public space, which is already complex and hazy.

What first drove me to this investigation was the socio-political situation of this peculiar "little island" ¹. They have a status difficult, even for its population, to explain: "We are a part, but not really"...something like that..."We are free state but we are associated" (Commonwealth). Free from what? Associated to whom? What does this relationship of Liberty and Association entail and how is it tolerated?

As a valid and necessary first exercise for trying to comprehend the dynamics and social relations, and therefore the political situation of this island, I considered experiencing the street. That is, I attempted to perceive the development and notions of public space. I believe that the fact that Puerto Rico is still a U.S.A. colony (as the U.N. considers it) and at the same time has the essence of a Latin-American country leads me to a lot of questions but very little answers.

By watching different artistic manifestations that take place in San Juan, one could notice an art clearly focused on public space. We find that the majority of public art that is created in San Juan is what Lucy Lippard names plunk art ² (traditional public art of exteriors), which simply enlarges the pieces' size and, even though it's placed on a public location, it could be hanged on a gallery just the same. This type of art conceptualizes public space as a transitory place for the piece before it reaches the gallery, usually its real objective. As an example, we mention Isabel Ramírez Pagán's work; she designs a type of wooden benches and installs them on public plazas or abandoned lots. After that voyage through city exteriors, the pieces are shown in artistic venues. Another interesting example in this line is that of Chemi Rosado's, who installs a trampoline in a zone near the Dos Hermanos bridge, where groups of kids gather to jump from the bridge to the lagoon. In this type of example one could apply the idea of utility of public art, because the piece serves momentarily for some activity in coexistence and dialogue. These two examples go along the lines of trying, with the use of aesthetic objects, to produce a social exchange in public space before the piece or its registry ends up in museums or galleries.

On the other side, in San Juan we can observe a huge variety of graffiti wallpapering the city due to collectives and artists with a clear plastic proposition. For example we can mention La Pandilla, Hello Again, Sofia Maldonado, and many others whose are offered walls to paint or are commissioned to "decorate" city walls. I would call these endeavors, so popular now, street murals. In my opinion, for them to be considered graffiti, it has to operate with a certain dose of illegality; because if not, they're just using graffiti's language for the creation of murals. I believe that while the skill behind these murals is undeniable, they don't act as a identity machine for the place on which they are painted on nor do they reflect a clear attitude towards public space.

I sense that when it comes to the perception of public space in Puerto Rico, there is always a notion of individuality; I hear people talk about it as a precise entity of personal circulation. It's an entity of transition rather than dialogue. Through public space one, or something, circulates from a private or commercial space to another and so on.

Streets don't serve as a meeting space, there is no social dialogue happening in them. Ideas, reflections or theories about why it's not used this way are so diverse they shock. It's said that it's because of the uncomfortable physical implications of being in a public space, some use the weather as an excuse: "The heat is dense and unbearable. Better go to Plaza"³ (Plaza Las Américas), a gigantic mall: "The Caribbean's biggest shopping center", they say proudly. An immersion in other tropical spots would be an interesting way of researching and comparing the development and notions they have on public space.

Therefore, "the street" in Puerto Rico is a concept too vague to be used for analyzing public art, because in it one can strongly perceive all the processes of experimentation of culture and power, which are intended to keep the population off the street. The intention is to keep everybody inside his or her house or in controlled environments. Social interaction is outright complicated and social organization lives a long and contemplative process.

a) Dog Food: public art not conceptualized as such.

On April 2010, the University of Puerto Rico experienced a moment of political convulsion due to a series of measures and budget cuts that the administration tried to implement. These events moved the students to demand a reason for these budget cuts. After not getting any clear or valid answers from the administration, the student body organized a series of protests that lead to an almost two-month long strike.

My paper is mainly focused on the artistic manifestations that resulted from the strike. These, from our perspective, can easily fit into what is considered public art, may them be intended as such or not, because they transform the street into a place of dialogue and relationships. We have to consider Puerto Rico's colonial situation and its population's passive attitude towards events of political nature. Consequently, these pieces emerged as an art of immediacy.

Hal Foster states "Art should intervene directly in culture-understanding culture as a place of conflict and permanent opposition- which is why the systems and apparatus that control cultural representations should be analyzed, using practices that seek to transform and defy the control systems of symbolic production and the circulation of signification processes"⁴. Still, these practices should attempt to achieve a material effectiveness so that they do not become re-appropriated and re-codified interventions inside the massive ideological space of domination.

The quantity of visual and performance art that emerged from the outbreak of the strike was abundant. They could constantly be seen on the streets surrounding campus, different types of artistic manifestations of interdisciplinary character that went from graphic and paint to performances. These had as a sole purpose to support students protesting the university's administration; the street was reestablished as a collective conscience generating space.

The Payapolicias (Clown Police), Colectivo Papel Machete, Agua, Sol y Sereno, Jóvenes del 98, Sembrando Conciencia and other artistic collectives, together with the rest of the population that showed up everyday, revived the space for artistic experimentation. They achieved to transform the street into that aspirational entity in which people create continuously. They reached dialogue and established a direct protest towards an issue of national concern. It wasn't an issue of a minority, as the university authorities vociferated, claiming that it was just a matter of a few young parasites that had nothing to do since they didn't study or work and lived off of U.S. welfare.

Even with the very diverse manifestations born from the strike, I would like to focus this paper on the relationship between performance and public sphere that resulted from said events; how, in this particular case, student protesters and even the rest of the population that supported their cause used artistic language to establish a specific dialogue about the befall of the struggle; how is public space experienced in this colonized nation.

The difference was marked with the traditional vision of a performance piece that constitutes a temporal piece made mostly by plastic artists. These pieces are almost always executed by an individual artist and lean to the production of events instead of objects; the analyzed piece goes along the lines of a collective action without any artistic intent, with the sole objective of protesting against repressive measures. Performance is seen as a form of expression that takes place in a public space and that has the purpose of questioning the practices and symbols that structure communal living.⁵

Performance emerges in the 60's in the middle of tremendous social and political turmoil. Therefore, it transforms into a tool for direct protest against social processes, and also into contempt towards the art market and the artistic object as a commercial product. Producing actions in place of the typical artistic object go against commercialization and consequently they would not be of interest to institutional business. The collective performance that we will analyze goes along another ideological line, we could say that it because it doesn't have

any artistic pretension and doesn't have any intention whatsoever of introducing itself in the art market.

With these types of collective performances we can observe the possibility of the subjects taking charge of public spaces still unconquered by hegemonic principles; also they view public sphere not as a static dimension but as a device for generating a space of critical production of popular opinion.⁶

The strike advanced while April came to an end. One day, like many other during this struggle, a group of parents and community members arrived at the main gate of campus -which was covered by riot police- with the intention of giving supplies and food to the students occupying the university campus. Police reaction was violent: the parents were denied the right to give food to their children and tensions escalated to the point where one parent was assaulted. The next day, a group of people arrived at the university gates, which were still under riot police guard, and started putting plates of dog food next to each policeman. Afterwards, they went around with a giant sack of dog food and began filling each plate. They finished their protest by putting signs next to the policemen that read "Beware of the dog". This action, spontaneously born after the day the riot police impeded the delivery of food to the students, clearly shows a renovation in performance style: a group of people, unidentified, acted in a way heavily charged with dissenting attitude.

This creative action sought to articulate political symbols in the street and looked for both cultural and artistic aspects of the piece to become a protest tool in a political device that uses symbols of everyday life to generate new social symbols. It is a piece that takes representations and meanings of everyday life and uses them as cultural elements pertaining to a new hegemony yet to be achieved.⁷

This piece was extremely clear in its use of symbols. Symbols were managed with the purpose of transforming the official connotations of elements of the state (i.e. the police). Their creation parted from a symbolism easily identifiable: the food that was denied to the students. In this case food wasn't denied, it was given to "those two-legged animals".

From my point of view, this rudimentary collective action of feeding someone who the day before denied someone food constitutes a hard ideological blow. Sadly, the press and even a part of society felt that it had crossed the line, this is a society which still believes in unquestionable respect for public servants and where "the police deserve respect, they protect us"⁸. What in other places could have turned into a more direct attack, both verbally and physically, against the repressive forces of the state, in this geographical point people acted with exemplary subtlety without dismembering its message.

This performance revealed connections between everyday life and politics by using simple and common elements: it demonstrated that the construction of a new subject could very well originate from such a radical symbolic interpretation. A change in the nation's collective conscience was caused by such a simple act as giving dog food to some policemen.

Moreover, this action turned the public sphere into a space of interaction where there was a real manifestation against a repressive act; since it was of participative character, its goal wasn't the production of objects or registry elaboration, as generally happens in protest art. This piece tried to convey what we could call a "mirror effect" (they did it to us, we do it to them), while at the same time demonstrating society's indignation towards a repressive action from the day before.

These new forms of protest are necessary and it's not just about generating a social revolt but also of starting to produce an alternative sense of action⁹. The piece came to creatively reinvent protest by constructing different politic-artistic strategies and redesigning the path step by step. The idea is that the protagonists achieve, on way or another is to artistically politicize public space and turn it into a space for socialization and construction of consensus. Different mechanisms have to be thought of in order to propose social change in a more fluid way. This can be attained with small developments that inspire small groups and later become large events that lead to big changes.¹⁰

The value of this performance lies in the symbolic disobedience towards the authoritative world and in the metaphorical intensity that its signs achieved to articulate in the collective imaginary. These actions are no longer pieces: they live a process of creation-dismemberment in terms of the creating individual because they don't have defined authors and the essence of the performance lies in the interactions product of said action.

b) Illegality in artistic processes

The previously described episode had some traces of illegality, for some, because there was a kind of obstruction of a public road and sidewalk; and because there was a direct offense or insult directed to a public servant: the police force, in this case. To this matter, I go back to John Cage's words, who defined art as a criminal act, art as a serious offense. As a delinquent activity, art can prove that government has no right to exist.¹¹ This is what exactly happened with the police; apart from them not doing their job, they repressed and prohibited.

The difficulty to overcome with these artistic pieces rooted in contestation is that they generally end up encapsulated in an artistic palace (museums). There, their radical force slowly weakens. Art, as it breaks the law, proves that government entities are totally superfluous and that they can be destructed. But, as Nelson Rivera states, this labor of destruction concerns general population, not just a group of artist¹².

Oscar Ianni¹³ mentions that the act of breaking the law in Puerto Rico is something more than an everyday occurrence. He calls it "horizontal violence" and uses common actions as examples: shouting while driving or running a red light. There are more extreme examples like gang violence and murder. I agree with Ianni in that there are some processes in violation of legal structures but, said actions are normally between citizens, they are violations in which the State does no

interfere directly, only indirectly with the imposition of laws of coexistence.

I believe that the confrontation of the citizen and the State happens in a very abstract form. There isn't a clear concept of illegality in terms of the clash of ideas and with what the government and its institutions represent, the citizen is afraid to directly challenge government institution.

This happens even when the most famous feats of liberation or acts of protests in Puerto Rico have been events with heavy artistic presence: the shooting of U.S. Congress in 1954 and the occupation of The Statue of Liberty in 1977. In Puerto Rico law is broken the same way art is made.¹⁴

As a direct justification to law breaking, I quote Puerto Rican nationalist and prócer ¹⁵Pedro Albizu: "violating the empire's law is abiding the homeland's law". Therefore, the island's political situation and the collective passivity of its population along with the almost null notion of illegality in terms of direct confrontation of the State makes this piece exceedingly suggestive and defiant.

c) Spontaneity in the emergence of artistic manifestations.

A crucial point in the conception of this piece and the creative process behind it has to do with the spontaneity of the performance's creation. That is to say, any group, no matter the social sector, be it artists or not, can express itself in a spontaneous form. Spontaneity will always result from individual artistic interests or creative processes repressed by economic, social, cultural or structures. Here is where Antonio Gramsci's idea comes into play. He believed that never in history would there be pure spontaneity because it would coincide with pure mechanistic"¹⁶. It always depends on a number of facts that facilitate the development of these spontaneous processes; however, many of these manifestations or actions don't leave identifiable documentation.

To the above, and drawing on Antonio Negri, we mention that "spontaneity is not negative; on the contrary, is the result of past experiences and struggles, intelligence turned body and will."¹⁷

Conclusion

Once this phenomenon is understood, and after stating our point of views terms of what constitutes the final step in the processes of solidification of horizontal public art, we'll refer to the etymology of "spontaneous". This helps us close on the idea about the necessity of these types of processes in this type of art. Spontaneous comes from the Latin 'sponte', which means that it makes itself free without external cause. This is where art finds one of its many purposes: being a vehicle for liberty, helping individuals satisfy their necessities based on individual moral conceptions, not based on regulated judgments that homogenize behavior, for consensus to be reached in a collective form.

Some expressions that fit into our idea of spontaneity in public art are "fleeting art" and "ephemeral interventions"; these should take place in a spontaneous and collective form. Generally, these expressions happen in the periphery of art circuits, they have to do more with collective notions or are in reply of certain events.

Said pieces, we believe, have the necessity of being passing, short-lived but frequent. They seek to put social situations on the spotlight and at the same time serve as a detonator for a solidarity act. Duque is clear in mentioning that certain actions should have a dose of aggressiveness and sarcasm for them to really become the antidote and reach every layer of the population.¹⁸

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Notes

1. “We are such a small island”, repeats the population.
2. LIPPARD LUCY. “Looking Around: Where We Are and Where We Could Be” From the text Ways of making. Critical Art, Public Sphere and Direct Action.” Editors: Paloma Blanco, Jesús Carrillo. Jordi Claramonte and Marcelo Expósito. Salamanca University Editions. Spain, 2001.
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7. DAGNINO, EVELINA. Culture, Citizenship and Democracy: New Discourses and Changing Practices in Latinamerican Left in Arturo Escobar, Sonia Álvarez and Evelina Dagnino Cultural Politics and the Culture of Politics. A view of Latinamerican Social Movements. Taurus, Madrid, 2001. pp.57.
8. Phrase commonly heard from the population.
9. REVILLA, MARISA. The Concept of Social Movement: Action, Identity and Sense in Political Institutions and Society. Grompone, Romeo (editor). IEP, Lima, 1995.
10. JORDAN JOHN’s words. Member of Reclaim the Streets collective in the “Metropolis” episode: Art and Activism. Televisión Española. 2010.
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12. RIVERA, NELSON. op, cit.,
13. Quoted in: RIVERA ,NELSON. op, cit.,
14. RIVERA, NELSON. op, cit.,
15. National hero esp of a struggle for independence.
16. GRAMSCI, ANTONIO. Political Writings, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires, 1977. pp. 327
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Theory

In Search of Digital Feminisms

Introduction

Ungoogleable: In Search of Digital Feminisms

“Up for Grabs”: Agency, Praxis, and the Politics of Early Digital Art

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In Search of a www.analogfeminism.net: Starting with Three Contrarian Concepts via Mother-Daughter Machines to Come

Introduction: In Search of Digital Feminisms

Patricia Ticineto Clough, Theory Thread Editor

It is my pleasure to turn the Theory Thread over to discussions of feminisms and the digital. Edited by Katherine Behar and Silvia Ruzanka, *In Search of Digital Feminisms* includes five essays and the editors' introduction that suggests we play with the shift from surfing to searching to what is fast becoming the offer, if not the intrusion, of piles of unrequested information. But *In Search of Digital Feminisms* is not an exercise in melancholia, longing for better digital days now past or for lost feminist horizons. It is a search, having already arrived at a destination, a before and an after all at once, the lost origin that always points to the work of an originary mediation or modulation, if not digitization. In other words, these are not anti-technology works; these are works seeking rather to find ways to creativity and multiplicity in identity and practice that can be an intervention into the contemporary scenes of feminisms and the digital. Although primarily offered as texts, the works that follow point to the need to make theoretical interventions a matter of practices, a matter of interactive mediation, a doing, if not a doing with others.

Ungoogleable: In Search of Digital Feminisms

Katherine Behar and Silvia Ruzanka, Guest Editors



Fig. 1, Siri Feminism: I Don't Know What You Mean, 2012, Resynplement, iPhone 4S screenshot, © Resynplement (Used with permission.)

Fig. 2, Siri Feminism: Would You Like to Search the Web?, 2012, Resynplement, iPhone 4S screenshot, © Resynplement (Used with permission.)

Fig. 3, Siri Feminism: I Don't Understand, 2012, Resynplement, iPhone 4S screenshot, © Resynplement (Used with permission.)

We begin our search for *digital feminisms* with the following terms: an acknowledgment that “search” represents an ambition which must fail. Siri’s failed searches only scratch at the surface that Siri is.

Search—with the reductiveness of its pointed directionality, the abhorrent popularity contests of its hegemonic algorithms [1], and the colonizing impulse of its corporate giants [2]—is an easy scapegoat for the paucity of contemporary digital expression and for techno-culture’s diminished returns. Search has become a stand-in fall guy for those among us who feel nostalgic for the more leisurely experience of Web 1.0, for a bygone time when users surfed the web, encountering the populism of what Olia Lialina calls the web’s nascent vernacular. Nostalgia for surfing the web is also nostalgia for the open possibilities of a still-undefined terrain—nostalgia for a moment when hierarchies were leveled and multinational corporations stood on the same footing as anyone’s home page filled with animated GIFs and neon blinking text. [3] This was the 1990s Net culture that supported cyberfeminism at its height. It may sting a bit for those who miss the old days before the Search Giants came in and everything changed. Digital feminisms should be—must be—“ungoogleable.”

The Curiosity of Search.

Where surfing is scenic, searching is teleological. Surfing is to searching as a Situationist *dérive* is to the utilitarian efficiency of Haussmann. [4]—Do we want answers or do we want ambiguity?

But the truth is, we already feel nostalgic for search. If surfing characterized the 1990s, and searching epitomizes the 2000s, then perhaps the 2010s are already embodied by a different relationship to information. At least we can see how search requires inquiry. Search must be ignited by interest, a question, or some active pursuit. The sea change in online culture that we are witnessing with the rise of feed-driven social media makes search look, in comparison, like the good old days. The curiosity of search sounds delightful when compared to the constant consumption and recirculation of only the most popular, most blanched information. Now, instead of pursuing information—through surfing or searching—mediated information comes to us. Heaping up like junk mail, it swallows us with the constant distraction of its feeds.

Social media ensnares us in the complacency of reposting/liking/tweeting/sharing so that we regurgitate the same. And herein lies the crux of the problem. Precisely this perpetuation of the same, far more than search’s superficial readiness to define, will prove deadly if we hope to encounter, and indeed engender, the multiplicity and difference that digital feminisms require.

Radar.

To be in search of digital feminisms means searching like radar: call and response. Here, a call for papers. And here, hear responses. Echoing back as we grope about in the dark, drawn to a blinking cursor. Echoing from unknown depths (startling the search party). Reverberating from all around, like surround sound, in

three hundred and sixty degrees. Responses hinting at a shape. At the lay of the land.

In this (test) case, perhaps a wiser question is: if we encounter digital feminisms, will we recognize them? Or is "digital feminisms" rather a *search tool itself*, a crimpler to kink the trajectory of search, which shunts us off in a new direction, away from an easy answer, or, precisely away from the singularity of an answer.

d) All of the ~~Above~~ Below.

What we are searching for, really, is diversity. A way to break the loop of the same feed, feeding the same. Our search for digital feminisms is a search for difference, reflected here in the varied perspectives each contribution to this collection adopts in its unique approach to the topic. Grant Taylor's essay, "'Up for Grabs': Agency, Praxis, and the Politics of Early Digital Art," opens this compendium with an examination of the experiences of women artists, who as pioneers in digital art, were among the first to straddle two male-dominated fields—the notoriously sexist world of engineering, and the hegemonic old boy's club of the institutionalized (and technophobic) art world. Surprisingly, Taylor reveals how, in this doubly masculinized setting, women artists were able to thrive. "In the formative years," he writes, "social norms proved to be more fluid and gender barriers remained unconstructed." Taylor's careful historical study explores the conditions that created a fertile window of opportunity during which digital art was "up for grabs."

Jumping ahead from an early history of digital art to a sociology of digital creativity, Sol Morén's essay brings us next into the present day. In "Digital Gender & Aesthetic Technology," Morén details her observations of girl bloggers in Sweden. Where Taylor's essay focuses on a moment in the history of digital art before gender norms became entrenched, Morén analyzes how gender norms are now constructed and perpetuated with and around technology. Her study explores the complex negotiations young women face in the course of their self-determination with technology. Morén highlights how women's "becoming technical" challenges "digital gender norms." "Becoming technical," in effect, she expounds, threatens the "dichotomist order" that is based on male and female characteristics being each other's opposites with the potential that being "technical could no longer be regarded as a male trait." Her research has led her to develop a theory she terms "aesthetic technology" to understand how girls approach technology artistically, and differently from boys. Girls' "becoming technical," she finds, both complicates digital gender and highlights the complexities of self-perception and agency for girls and women in *homosocial networks*, both online and in real life.

The question of self-forming (and deforming) identity is at the heart of the next essay in this collection by performance artist, technologist, and cultural theorist, Praba Pilar. *BOT I*, Pilar's contribution, appears here as a performance script accompanied by a portfolio of photographs. *BOT I* is a radical monologic mash-up of autobiographical material from Pilar's childhood in a computing family and her passions for and against technology, cut in and through the texts of Samuel Beckett's "Not I" and Isaac Asimov's *I Robot*. Ruthless in its refusal of all gentility and tact, and insistent in its feminist critique, Pilar's script reveals the blind spots that capitalist techno-culture reserves for ethics and the body.

In Pilar's *BOT I*, we experience the struggle of a complex, multivocal entity, and the artists featured in the next essay, by curator Jillian Hernandez, embrace multiplicity and proliferation as strategies in their interrogations of identity. In "Mediations on the Multiple: On Plural Subjectivity and Gender in Recent New Media Art Practice," Hernandez invites several artists from her multi-venue 2009 exhibition *Losing Yourself in the 21st Century* into conversations about their work. [5] As technology often plays a crucial role in these works, Hernandez is careful to remind us that "it is not just a play of identity that is facilitated by technology but more importantly the modes of communicating how gendered and racialized subjects escape and are in excess of social constructions." In assessing the forms these artists engage, Hernandez speculates that "[p]erhaps contemporary women-identified artists find assemblages of subjectivity and subjectlessness productive for cultural critique; amalgams of bodies, intensities, sensations, and affects that stimulate-away the coherence of any one self." The tapestry of voices that emerges in this text reflects the decentered, inconclusive process of gendered subject formation and the ongoing negotiation of identity.

Kyoo Lee's "In Search of www.analogfeminism.net: Starting with Three Contrarian Concepts via Mother-Daughter Machines to Come" provides the apt conclusion to this collection. Lee sends us tracing our steps, back to before where we began. Skating from René Descartes to Kara Walker, she asks us "to go gray between zeroes and ones." Reverting from the digital to its ancestral digit, a finger, Lee uses text and textuality to point out a multiplicity of directions, all of which refrain from a directive. In a series of "posts" negotiating, inheritance, reference, and influence, the daughter searching for the mother returns to sender.

From this circuitous ending, which takes us back before the beginning, we come to a revised query: What is an anti-search engine? How to implement the algorithm for this unfindable query?

Postscript to the Introduction.

"On the road map you won't drive off the edge of your known world. In space as I want to imagine it, you just might."—Doreen Massey [6]

Where is the next way out when the rhizome eats itself in a vicious cycle of feeds? We need not just one twisting tunnel—this is a search for multiplicities, for simultaneous and contradictory paths.

The question of search is also a question of space. Search takes place within and across space, seeking points and nodes and defining pathways and connections across landscapes of data. Search is confined by space and its operation is determined by the shape of its information territories. How do we find the gray areas in digital spaces built from binary patterns of zeroes and ones in stark black and white? The dualistic logic seems deeply ingrained. However, just as in chaos theory, massive scale and iteration may open the door to unpredictable results. Search engine logic and social media feeds are like gravity wells, locking us into their orbits. The space of the Net becomes neatly partitioned and delineated. Instead, we need strange attractors and the complex folds of chaotic boundary conditions. We need a new map.

In her critique of Western cartography, geographer Doreen Massey grapples with the closed structure of the map, which erases both the encounter with difference and the possibility of surprise.

Instead, she argues for what she terms "the chance of space," which allows for disruption, accidental juxtaposition, and multiple voices in continually shifting configurations. The chance of space is primarily defined not by external forces but by the multiple trajectories within it. This suggests that our search must operate not just by seeking an alternate space, but by actively creating it. Like the infinitely unpredictable plot of a point within the Mandelbrot set, search traverses a space and also shapes it. The trail traces a new space, or perhaps a reconfiguration of an existing space, which again has room for the unexpected and the unknown.

A different sort of space, a different sort of search: an anti-search engine with an alternate algorithm.

A reverse-look-up tool for blind searches, or for searching without results, without finding them.

A search tool for an ("unknown" || "unknowable" || "moving") && "target." Searching not to find, but to be found.

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4. French urban planner and designer Baron Haussmann is known for rebuilding post-revolutionary Paris. His renovations modernized the city, replacing its old network of twisting, labyrinthine streets with a straight, gridded plan featuring open, wide boulevards.
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“Up for Grabs”: Agency, Praxis, and the Politics of Early Digital Art

Grant David Taylor

When Lillian Schwartz made the decision in 1968 to employ computers to create art, she was required to enter a field with arguably the strongest masculine culture -- engineering. Therefore, we expect Schwartz's experience to be a negative one, reflecting the institutionalized sexism that engineering was notorious for. Yet we find the opposite to be the case. The artist found early computing to be devoid of gender bias. Using this simple paradox as my starting point, my essay explores the role of gender in the formation of digital art. Informed by personal reflection and anecdote, this case study reveals women artists as key agents in the development and propagation of digital art in the United States. [1] Although their art is varied in form and focus and each started at different moments, these pioneering artists, including Lillian Schwartz, Collette Bangert, Joan Truckenbrod, Grace Hertlein, Rebecca Allen, Copper Giloth, Barbara Nessim, and Cynthia Rubin, shared similar experiences. Compared to the patriarchal power structure that defined the mainstream artworld, these women found the emergent field of computing to be relatively open. In those formative years social norms proved to be more fluid and gender barriers remained unconstructed, even though computing would masculinize soon after. In its infancy, digital art was, as artist and writer Anne M. Spalter enthusiastically put it, “up for grabs.”

But how did women artists overcome the fallacy that computer technology was inherently masculine? And why did computing become a kind of sanctuary for some women artists? I will show that the indeterminacy and flux that permitted freer agency, was reflected in the computing field as a whole. During the late 1960s, computer science went through a rapid process of expansion and professionalization, and the visual sphere of computing, computer graphics, was in its developmental stage. A number of distinctive research laboratories arose, and though they reflected the increasing androcentric character of computing, they were decidedly more inclusive, searching for the most creative minds regardless of gender. Other larger cultural and political shifts also impacted female participation. The second-wave of feminism produced many desirable outcomes, including gender equality laws, which influenced male-dominated occupations, and education reform, which broadened opportunities for women in both science and art. By no means, however, was the formation of digital art seamless. As many of the artists will attest, an enduring gender-neutral space was elusive. Doors that were once open to women in the first years soon closed. And while women were able to define what was then called “computer art” outside the parameters of male hegemony, the computer was actively shunned by the orthodox artworld. For traditional artists and critics, computer art, with its reliance of techno-science discourse, was antithetical to most artworld ideals. Over time, this anti-computer sentiment, which affected all artists using the medium, would prove so pervasive that it often eclipsed the sexism later suffered by women.

The impact of women in the formation of early digital art has been largely ignored. Underlying this lack of scholarship is a double predisposition: firstly, the view that women played an insignificant role in the development of digital technology, and secondly, that ‘computer art’ is inconsequential to normative art historiography. Recently, however, perceived imbalances have led historians from a variety of disciplines to uncover, what professor of sociology Judy Wacjman aptly described as the “hidden” history of women in early computing. [2] As recent research has shown, women's contributions are often minimized or ignored as technology is historicized through masculine discourse. [3] Current historical research has revealed much of what was obscured, placing visionary computer programmers, such as Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper, in full context. [4] Reaching farther back into history, various disciplinary perspectives have now been written on the 19th-century mathematician, Augusta Ada King, Countess of

Lovelace, whose seminal role in programming the first mechanical computer has elevated her to an almost mythical place in the chronicle of computing. As this new research emerged—acting as a counterforce to prevailing masculinist narratives—woman artists also began telling their story. In 1993, the journal *Leonardo* began the Women, Art, and Technology Project as a way to “encourage women artists working with technology-based media to write about their work.” [5] Such initiatives proved successful and publications followed. For instance, Judy Mallory’s edited book, *Women, Art, and Technology* (2003), gave evidence of a “strong, influential, central female presence in the field of new media,” even in the face of “continuing male domination of the computer industry.” [6]

While these published accounts are welcomed, we find emphasis is weighted toward contemporary artists, thus effectively leaving the cultural context of early women artists largely unexplored. This oversight has meant authors predictably posit Collette Bangert in 1967 and Lillian Schwartz in 1968 as the first women to employ the computer to generate art. In actual fact, the first women involved in computer-generated art were not Bangert and Schwartz, but more likely women programmers working a half a decade earlier at the Army Ballistic Research Laboratories (BRL) in Aberdeen, Maryland. Uncovering the forgotten history of the first “award winning” example of computer art gives us insight into both the militaristic origins of digital art as well as how computer programming, commonly perceived as androcentric today, was originally a highly feminized occupation.

The trade journal *Computers and Automation* facilitated the birth of computer art through its “Computer Art Contest” in 1963. That year, the first and second prizes went to the BRL, a site synonymous with the computing revolution during and after the Second World War. BRL had produced the first general-purpose electronic computer, the famous ENIAC, which was followed by ever more powerful computers, such as the ORDVAC, EDVAC and the BRLESC 1. The prize winning art piece, *Splatter Diagram*, which was a design analogue of the radial and tangential distortions of a camera lens, would have been computed on one of the later machines.

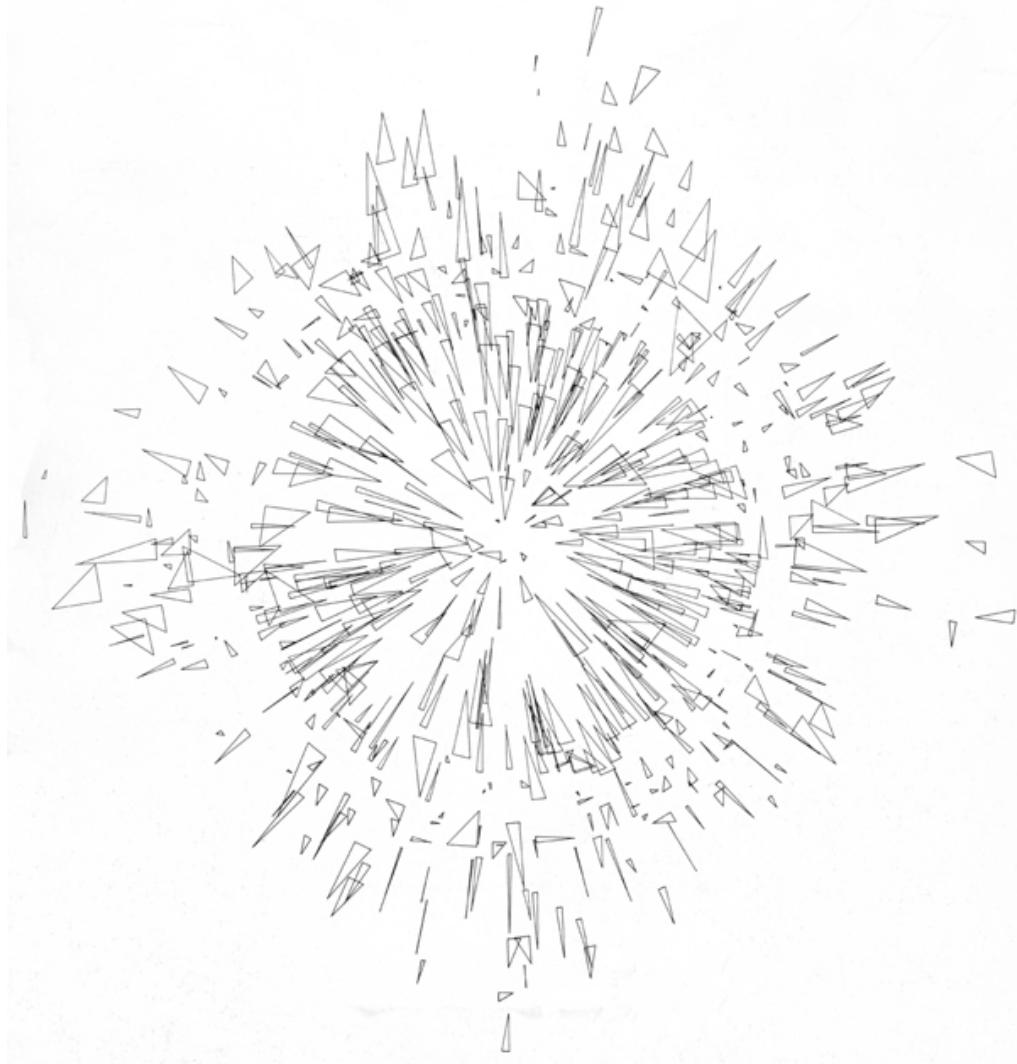


Fig. 1 - Splatter Diagram, 1963, United States Government, Ballistic Research Laboratories, Aberdeen, Maryland, computer-generated.

In 1964, the same laboratory won first prize again for an image produced from the plotted trajectories of a ricochetting projectile. The original images, which now appear to be lost, were not attributed to a particular person, being largely collaborative efforts and byproducts of ballistics visualizations. Nevertheless, by investigating the history of computing at BRL, we can be sure women played a part in this milestone in digital art history.

Women were seminal in the development of the electronic computer. [7] Even prior to the Second World War, women were responsible for manually calculating complex firing tables required for ballistic weaponry—they were in effect “human computers.” At BRL, large groups of women were required to calculate tables around the clock. Following the War, the best ‘computers’ were recruited by male engineers to code the first modern electronic computer, the ENIAC, which was a direct descendant of the computer used in the creation of the first computer artworks. The “ENIAC girls,” as they are now popularly called, are widely celebrated as the “world’s earliest computer programmers,” [8] and would provide the model for female involvement in future groundbreaking ballistics visualization at BRL.

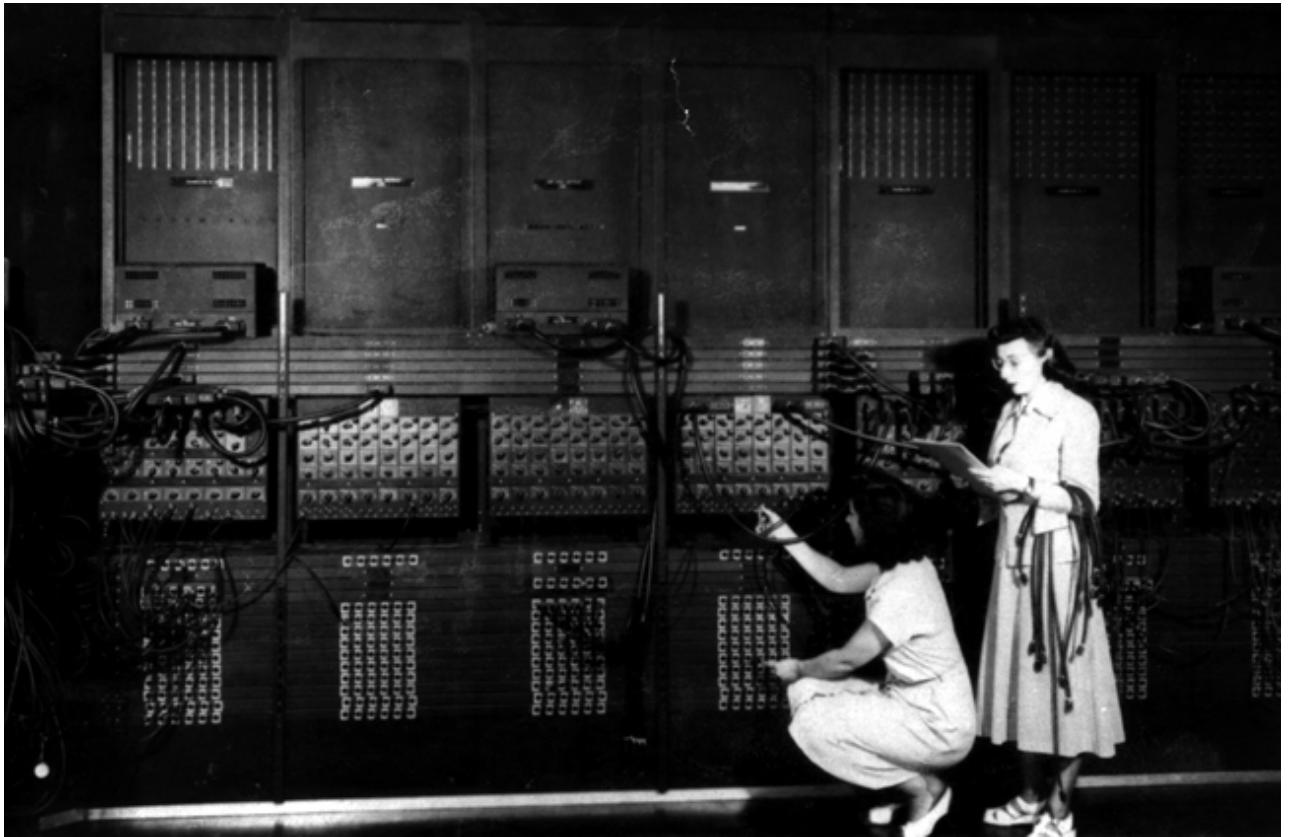


Fig. 2 - Ester Gerston and Gloria Ruth Gorden operating the ENIAC, "U.S. Army Photo" from the archives of the ARL Technical Library.

By the time trained women artists entered the field in the late 1960s, the terrain of computing was becoming increasingly masculine. Since the 1940s, programming had been largely a female occupation. Mimicking the mechanical operation of the telephone switchboard, the programmer possessed the long-standing gendered overtones of clerical work. The male engineer, conversely, was the "planner" whose role was deemed more analytical. In the professional hierarchy, the male was associated with technical mastery and intellectual analysis, while the female role of programmer was associated with rudimentary manual labor, even if the business of programming was a highly demanding ability, requiring various creative and analytical skills. [9] In the late 1960s, however, programming would become stereotypically a masculine endeavor, making the profession, as historian Nathan Ensmenger writes, "inhospitable to all but the most adventurous and unconventional women." [10] Today's "computer geek," characterized as highly idiosyncratic, frequently unkempt, socially detached, and fiercely non-conformist, developed from this gendered archetype. Early women artists were acutely aware that computing was being culturally constructed as masculine. Sue Gollifer, who looked at computing as a possible path in the early 1970s, was hesitant to enter, sensing the prevailing male paradigm, and Rebecca Allen, while lamenting the inherent maleness of all professional fields, perceived computing as "hyper-male."

Incongruent as it may seem, the computer industry was still remarkably accepting of women, even as it went through a process of masculinization. [11] In 1967, *Cosmopolitan* magazine published an article, entitled "The Computer Girls," that signaled larger cultural changes. Though appearing often trivial and sexist to contemporary readers, the article captured the spirit of the computer revolution as it appeared to women in the field. The article announced the "unlimited" opportunities within computing, an industry going through rapid expansion and a subsequent labor shortage. The author confidently announced that "sex discrimination in hiring" was practically nonexistent, boldly stating that if the woman was "qualified, she's got the job." [12] One of the woman programmers profiled in the article, Helene Carson, felt she was "fully accepted as a professional," a recognition she had not received in traditional sciences. [13] The

assertions in the article proved to be true. Some of the normal barriers to female participation were absent. This upward mobility was evidenced in 1969 when Rear Admiral Grace Hopper, who was also quoted in the *Cosmopolitan* article as a female expert, was awarded, ironically, a prestigious "man of the year" award for service to computer science. In this time of rapid expansion, the computer industry, in conjunction with leading research universities, were remarkably receptive to female involvement, subsidizing many of those early programming courses taken by women artists.

While the door was open for women to enter the industry, women artists were more attracted to what Rebecca Allen described as the "leading edge" of the digital frontier. Rather than join the commercial and business sector of computing, a sphere where women programmers were in such high demand, women artists entered at the point where advanced research was conducted. Women artists found themselves at university research centers, such MIT, NYIT, Brown University, and the University of Illinois, while others started at corporate settings, such as Bell Labs, TIME Corp, and 3M. Joan Truckenbrod felt that although computing was a "gendered milieu," and that a woman was necessarily an "outsider," being at the center of an emerging technology was "liberating." At this leading edge, computing was far less defined, highly experimental, and less prone to the stifling weight of institutionalization. Moreover, during the last years of the 1960s, computer science was only just emerging as a legitimate scientific field. With the publication in 1968 of Donald Knuth's canonical text, *The Art of Computer Programming*, computer science now had a substantive history and a solid theoretical foundation. New journals, societies, and standardized education followed, completing the process of professionalization. Even though women artists were entering the computing at its determinative stage, the area of their artistic focus was an even less developed subfield of computer science—computer graphics and animation. Where computer science traces its lineage back to the 1940s, computer graphics was a child of the 1960s. In 1960, William Fetter, an engineer from Boeing, coined the term computer graphics, and through that decade, various corporate and university laboratories created revolutionary visual technologies, including, at the close of the decade, the Graphic User Interface (GUI). During the late 1960s, the special interest group dedicated to graphics research, SIGGRAPH, would form and eventually become, under the leadership of women artists, an avid supporter of computer art.

While a lack of clear disciplinary boundaries across computing aided women artists, larger social and political changes also augmented self-determination. In the early 1970s, during a highly successful period in the history of second-wave feminism, the *Equal Employment Opportunity Act and Title IX of the Education Amendments* passed, which outlawed sex discrimination in the workplace and educational settings. In addition, federally mandated affirmative action had an impact on those technology sectors that relied on government contracts. [14] In the period from 1968 to 1972 women scientists and engineers, who had endured years of discrimination, began to talk about "fairness and the need for change." [15] New industry groups, such as the American Society of Engineering Education, formed task forces to examine gender issues in the discipline. As a result of this cultural reflexivity, the percentage of engineering students who were women increased exponentially. With a corresponding growth of women in computer science, The Association for Women in Computing (AWC) was founded in 1978.

Similar gains were felt in those creative fields once dominated by men; for example, a generation of women science-fiction writers came to prominence. [16] In the visual arts, the feminist movement brought about immediate and wide-ranging effects, including landmark exhibitions, fresh critical perspectives, and new activist organizations. [17] In the area of praxis, some feminist artists chose to cease painting, considering the medium, with its elevated position in the Western art canon, as too masculinist. Non-mainstream media, such as textiles, video, and the body (performance), became appropriate alternatives. Anne

Spalter suggests that women were attracted to the computer for similar reasons; because "unlike traditional fine art media, [the computer] does not have a history of primarily male practitioners." [18] Contrasting strongly to other avant-garde movements of the period, such as Minimalism, computer art had an absence of any rarefied canon of masters or aggrandized biographies of male practitioners. [19] But while the computer lacked the masculine import of other media, it was not widely used as a feminist tool, as was the case with video. Unlike their feminist contemporaries who challenged cultural norms, early computer artists—male or female—did not reflect an overt interest in polemics. When Schwartz entered Bell Labs, she was not actively seeking equal rights within the male domain. It was not until the 1980s that women dealt directly with gender issues. Even when Copper Giloth in the 1980s approached the controversial topic of abortion in her installation *Clothes Hangers*, she found her peers in the computer art movement to be "uncomfortable," preferring instead to avoid highly politicized topics.

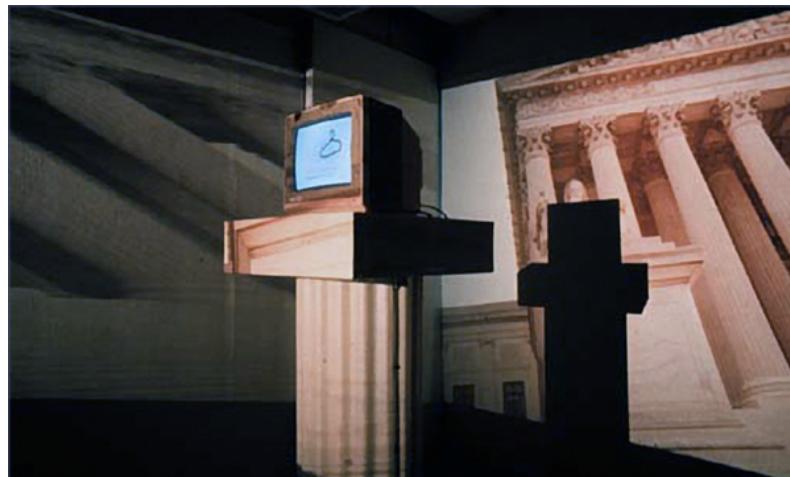


Fig. 3 - Copper Giloth working on a DataMax ZGrass UV-1 computer in the studio at Real Time Design Inc, 1982.

Fig. 4 - Clothes Hangers, 1984, Copper Giloth, slides and Amiga computer, part of a larger media installation, titled Narrative Information, © Copper Giloth (Used with permission.)

In another landmark moment in digital art history, Allen, who had been interested in the implications of bodily movement, a topic common to feminist theorists of the period, created *The Catherine Wheel*, the first ever publicly broadcasted 3-D computer-generated character to mimic human motion. Allen was gratified that this historic character was female.

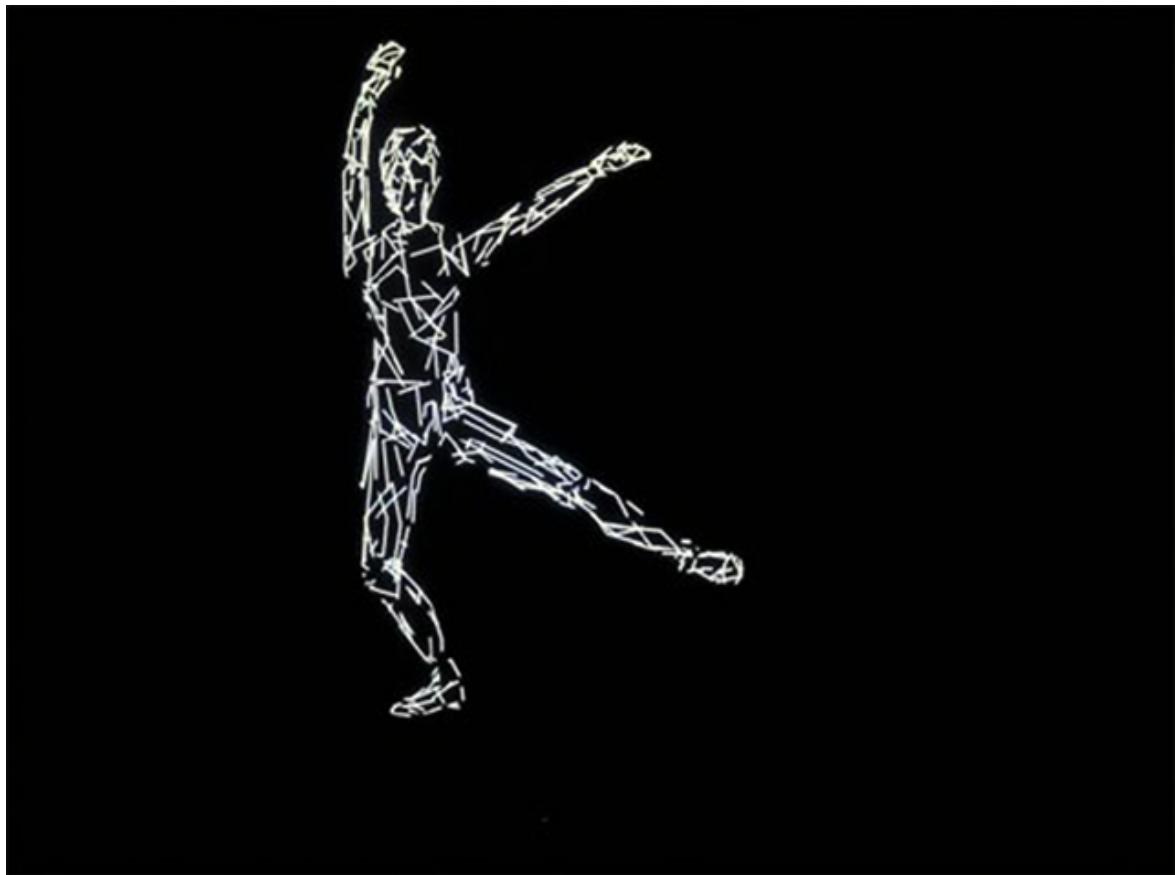


Fig. 5 - The Catherine Wheel, 1982, Rebecca Allen, still from performance film, choreography by Twyla Tharp, music by David Byrne, © Rebecca Allen (Used with permission.)

Perhaps one of the reasons why early digital art was largely apolitical was that producing art with early computers was exceedingly difficult—getting the machine to function correctly was seen as a major success. It took a certain type of artist—inqisitive, persistent, and insightful—who could commit to the ever-changing technical demands. Common to pioneers was a vision, or “intuition” as Truckenbrod described it, that computers would fundamentally change art. This desire to be at the forefront of this new digital age is what led Schwartz to Bell Labs.



Fig. 6 - Lillian Schwartz at the Computer, Bell Laboratories © 1974, Lillian Feldman Schwartz. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission Lillian Feldman Schwartz Collection, The Ohio State University Libraries.

She was part of a larger cultural movement in the late 1960s that attempted to marry—often with acrimonious outcomes—the worlds of art and technology. The Art and Technology movement, as it became called, was a conscious effort to foster collaboration between artists and large private and government institutions, such as AT&T and IBM. In 1966, the movement gained traction when avant-garde artist, Robert Rauschenberg, joined with Bell Labs physicist, Billy Klüver, to stage *Nine Evenings: Theatre and Engineering*. This watershed event was soon followed by the founding of Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), an organization Schwartz joined. Following Schwartz's inclusion in the 1968 epoch defining exhibition, *The Machine: As Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age*, she was invited to Bell Labs, where she stayed for much of her career.

The Art and Technology movement was part of a larger desire to bridge what appeared to be two increasingly divergent worlds of art and science. Without these various collaborative initiatives of the 1960s, like the one at Bell Labs, artists would not have had access to computers. And even when artists gained access to computer labs, it was usually at nights and weekends, times when the computer was not in official use. These laboratories required an expansive vision, one that valued open-ended exploration over short-term commercial application. Bell Labs was that type of unique institution, a “place of misty legend” as Knowlton describes it, where engineers were free to explore without the burden of immediate commercial application. [20] Under the energetic leadership of John R. Pierce, engineers and artists took a variety of art forms—graphics, music, choreography, film, and animation—and exposed them to the new powers of digitization. Bell Labs' success created a collaborative model that other research institutions followed. When Rebecca Allen went to MIT's Architecture Machine Group, which was male-

dominated like Bell Labs, it was her intelligence and creative drive that gained her acceptance. She sensed an attitude that if you "were smart, you would be accepted." In this environment, innovative thinking gave someone credibility; it meant a woman could "get into the club." Likewise, when Giloth completed graduate research at the Electronic Visualization Laboratory (EVL) at the University of Illinois, Chicago, which was founded in 1973 by Tomas DeFanti and Daniel Sandin, she received a "good reception." Being a genuine interdisciplinary program, the all-male faculty were more attracted to her training in sculpture and her ambitious and exploratory ideas than her gender. For both these women, they felt they were judged on how effectively they could contribute to the process of invention. As Grace Hertlein recollected, "we were equal and what mattered was the work." The women artists often felt a collaborative spirit that connected them to their male counterparts—a thin line that fastened them together on what Allen recalls as the "scary edge" of advanced technology.

Although these cutting-edge research environments were inclusive, seeking the most creative minds regardless of gender, it is important to recognize that even at these progressive intuitions, true gender equality was elusive. The "boys' clubhouse" mentality in computing has been well documented, [21] and artists, like Allen, felt the "unspoken assumptions" of the field and the "passive rituals and longstanding hierarchies" of the lab environment. Allen felt that if she was to be successful, she would need to conform and adapt. At MIT, Allen was entering a field with few women, and being an artist made her even more exotic. Being both was an obvious challenge. And even though Schwartz found gender to be a trouble-free issue at Bell Labs, the first celebrated computer artwork to be produced at the famed Lab was the result of a decidedly male styled "sophomoric prank." [22] Taking place a few years before Schwartz's arrival, the event nonetheless illustrates the masculinist culture of computer engineering at that time. When Knowlton learned that his engineering colleague, Leon Harmon, was going to be absent from the building, he generated a large nude image to cover his colleague's office wall.

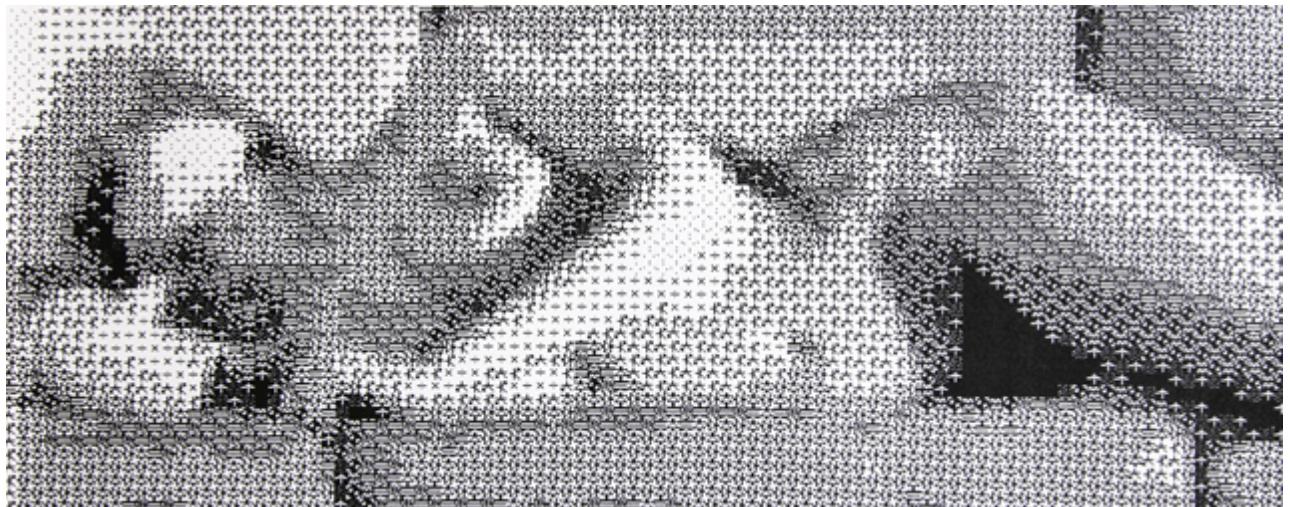


Fig. 7 - Leon Harmon and Ken Knowlton, *Studies in Perception*, 1998, (from original image of 1967) Screen-print of a computer-generated image, © The Anne and Michael Spalter Digital Art Collection 1997 (Used with permission.)

Middle management, nervous about the risqué image, asked for it to be taken down. Sometime later, however, it was employed at Robert Rauschenberg's loft as a backdrop to an Art and Technology press conference, and then later the image appeared in the *New York Times*. Once nervous about displaying the nude, Bell Labs, sensing the popularity of the image, now made certain that it was accredited to the AT&T Corporation. Knowlton, delighted that his prank had made it to the "venerable Times" and thus making a cultural transition from "frivolous in-your-face pornography" to "in-your-face Art," proceeded to give the nude the more "dignified title" it carries today. [23]

While women artists had to endure unwelcome masculine behaviors in the vanguard of computing, those experiences were often minor compared to the highly gendered impasses found in the artworld. What made the artworld even more forbidding were the responses to the computer itself, which ranged from deep suspicion to total indifference. Computer artists discovered early, as Allen reminisced, that "the artworld was against anything using a computer." Barbara Nessim, who had gained access to computers at TIME Corporation, was flabbergasted when she invited fellow artists to work digitally, only to find them hastily reject the invitation. Grace Hertlein remembers vividly being mocked and insulted by traditional artists. Some in the arts were uncomfortable with the fact that the computer had technocratic and militaristic origins, deeming it to be part of the dehumanizing tendencies of the military-industrial complex. [24] Other critics were more dismissive, viewing computer art as just another example of the vulgarization of science, where besotted artists, flirting with the latest scientific and technological media, produced what was tantamount to science as kitsch. [25] As students, women artists were actively discouraged from pursuing computing as a possible art-making path. While some galleries showed computer art, these exhibitions were often "condescendingly reviewed," as though the medium was "without serious intent or noble aspiration." [26] In fact, there is a litany of stories that tell how computer art had been accepted on its merits only to be rejected once the curators discovered it was produced with the use of the computer. Most computer artists were castigated and insulted by the mainstream art galleries. [27] Such was the stigma attached to computers that artists have used the expression "kiss of death" to describe the act of using computers in art. [28] As a result, the term "computer art" was so thoroughly denigrated that its usage declined in the 1990s, eventually being replaced by the more expansive descriptor: "digital art."

Because the "door to the artworld was closed," as Allen explained, artists were required to "seek other venues" to show their digital art. Allen and Schwartz expanded into other media forms, showing their artwork on public and cable television networks, which resulted in both receiving Emmys.



Fig. 8 - Rebecca Allen working on her 1986 award-winning animated music video, *Musique Non Stop* for German pop group Kraftwerk, © Rebecca Allen (Used with permission.)

Securing an ongoing exhibition was finally achieved by Darcy Gerbarg and Copper Giloth who organized the first art exhibitions in conjunction with the SIGGRAPH conference. Curated by Gerbarg, the inaugural 1981

exhibition included Lillian Schwartz, Joan Truckenbrod, Ruth Leavitt, Copper Giloth and Colette Bangert. Giloth would curate the following two annual SIGGRAPH exhibitions, with the 1983 "Exhibition of Computer Art" becoming a highly successful international show. [29] While the first exhibition was a modest affair, existing as a minor sideshow to the latest research presentations, it allowed artists to develop the *esprit de corps* of a relatively coherent group. From the perspective of the mainstream artworld, however, the developing community appeared, as Allen wryly described it, as the "computer art ghetto." Although other international groups emerged and provided new exhibition spaces, such as Ars Electronica in Linz Austria and ISEA founded in the Netherlands, segregation from the orthodox artworld continued to plague digital artists. Beyond becoming a kind of *Salon des Refusés* for digital artists, these organizations continued to play a crucial supportive role, one in which a confederate of like-minded artists could share their abiding interests in emergent technology. Eventually, however, those institutions, along with the digital arts as a whole, emerged as a microcosm of the larger artworld, reflecting similar hierarchical structures and modes of exclusivity.

Gerberg and Giloth's leadership and vision was part of a longer tradition of women shaping digital arts. Women emerged as primary agents in the theorization and criticism of computer art as early as the late 1960s. In 1968, Jasia Reichardt curated arguably the most important exhibition of early digital art, *Cybernetic Serendipity -- The Computer and the Arts*, at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London. This bold curatorial experiment initiated much of the worldwide interest in computer art and provided a template for future multimedia art exhibitions. Reichardt followed with two influential publications, *The Computer in Art* (1971) and *Cybernetics, Art and Ideas* (1971), which marked her as the most astute commentator of the computer art phenomenon. Other women voices were heard during the period. Grace Hertlein wrote extensively on computer art, founding the magazine *Computer Graphics and Art*, and Ruth Leavitt gave voice to a range of computer artists in her seminal book *Computer and Artist* (1976). In addition, the visionary writings of Lillian Schwartz, Vera Molnar, and Collette Bangert shaped computer art discourse, creating the foundation for the next generation of writers, who included Cynthia Goodman, Margaret Lovejoy, Patric Prince, and Anne M. Spalter.

But perhaps where women artists were most transformative was through their innovative approach to the medium. Early computer art was dominated by geometric abstraction, and male technologists and artists were quick to trace their hard-edge, linear aesthetic back to early abstract modernist movements, such as Constructivism. Women were crucial in shifting computer art away from the cool rhetoric of mechanical abstraction, toward styles informed by the organic and the human. [30] For example, in the early 1970s, Grace Hertlein completed the naturalistic work *The Field*, which employs traditional drawing mediums such as paper, pens, and inks to produce more biological effects.

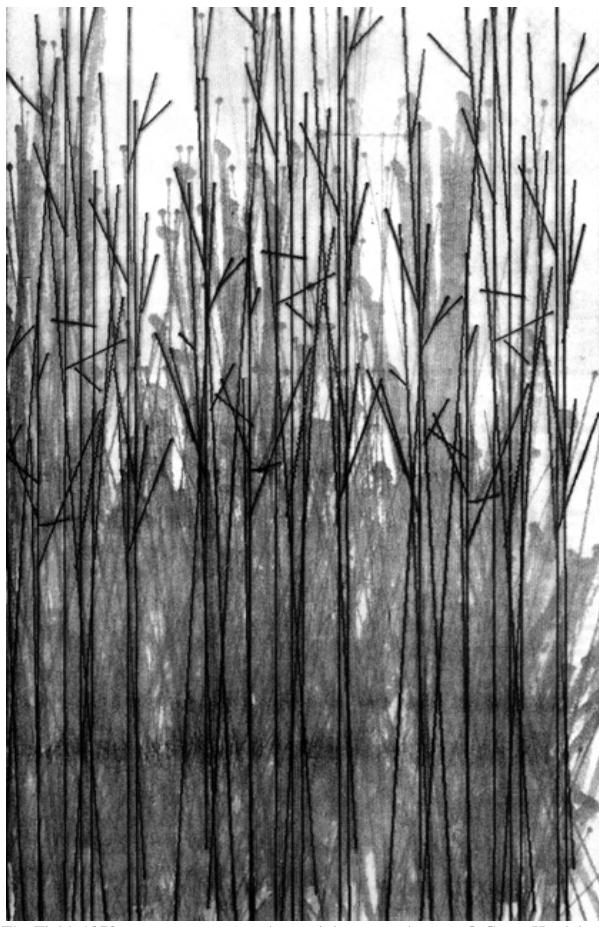


Fig. 9 - Grace C. Hertlein, *The Field*, 1970, computer-generated, grey ink on pastel paper, © Grace Hertlein (Used with permission.)

Women artists deliberately subverted the precision and symmetry of the computer, pushing their practice towards inexactness and disorder. Bangert, who sought to humanize the computer, produced landscapes with her husband that simulate expressionistic strokes of the human hand.

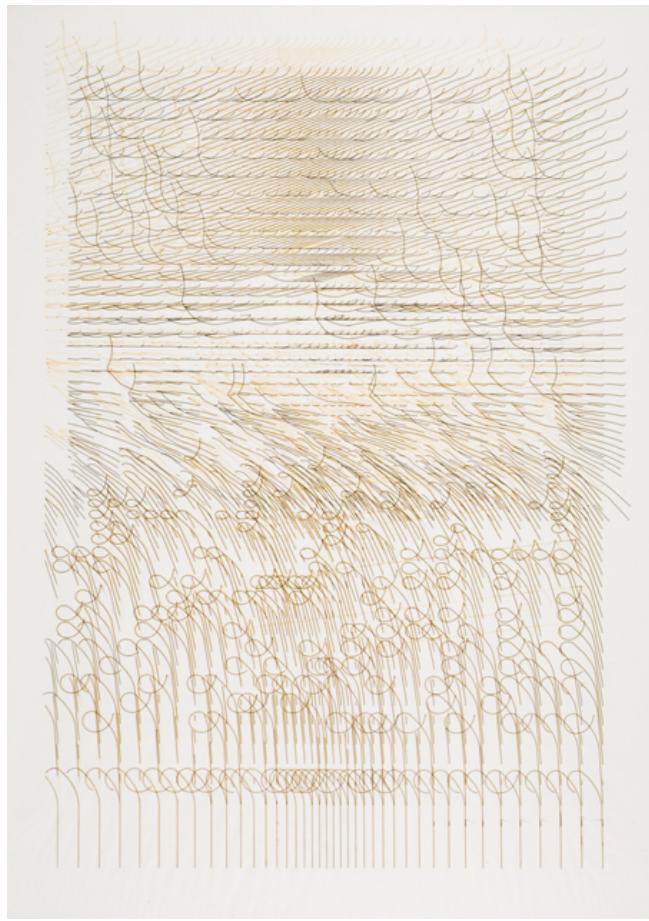


Fig. 10 - Colette Bangert and Charles Bangert, Large Landscape: Ochre and Black, 1970, ink on paper, computer-plotter, Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, Gift of Colette Stuebe Bangert and Charles Jeffries Bangert, 1999.0232.

Though not conscious of it at the time, the naturalizing tendencies undertaken by computer artists mirrored the intentions of many feminist artists of the period, who took ownership over those gender stereotypes deemed feminine. In response to the disembodied, masculinized abstraction of late modernist movements, feminists celebrated the physicality of the body and the subjectivity of personhood. [31]

However, women did not merely introduce tactile and natural form into computer aesthetics; they tested the very boundaries of the digital art object. In the first decade, most artists and theorists defined computer art in terms of the paradigm of the "artist-programmer," who worked at mathematically configured spatial form, pattern, and structure, which conformed to established norms of static, pictorial art. Schwartz and Truckenbrod effectively ignored computer art's modernist impulse to rigorously delimit and define the new art form. From the very beginning, these women artists were interested in the sensual, interactive, and synesthetic aspects of digital creation. The idea of the computer as an "expanded medium" had been implicit in Schwartz's practice since the late 1960s. [32] By integrating both digital and analogue media, traditional practice and advanced technology, Schwartz employed the computer as a polymorph of tools. Digital production was not just a cerebral exercise, widely accepted by those artists who viewed "programming" as the true art form, but as a full sensory experience. Seeing the computer as a consortium of tools that mimic traditional media, Schwartz foresaw the screen-based, multifaceted digital arts practice that emerged in the late 1980s. Sharing the language common to avant-garde artists of the era, though operating on the peripheries, early women artists desired to "disrupt," "push," "subvert," and "reconfigure" digital technology.

While the first women found unprecedented success in expanding and theorizing digital art, perhaps their most enduring legacy is in the field of education. Most acted as the first educators to teach digital

forms of art, while others built the first digital art and new media programs in the United States, and thus introduced a new generation of women to digital arts. Lillian Schwartz became a goodwill ambassador for the United States Information Agency (USIA), lecturing on computers and art around the globe. Sonia Landy Sheridan started the highly innovative Generative Systems Department at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Joan Truckenbrod was instrumental in bringing computer arts to Northern Illinois University and building the Art and Technology program at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Rebecca Allen, was the founding co-director of UCLA's Center for the Digital Arts, and later the founding chair of Design | Media Arts at the same institution. Copper Giloth developed undergraduate and graduate programs in Computer Art at the University of Massachusetts, Grace Hertlein started computer arts at Chico State University, and Barbara Nessim was instrumental in bringing computing to the Parsons School of Design. However, founding these digital art programs was not without difficulty. While traditionalists soon realized that digital media was going to significantly shape future art, all the women artists received significant pushback from suspicious art departments. For Giloth, the deeply patriarchal male colleagues in the department found advanced technical expertise intimidating—especially when it “came from a woman.” Unfortunately, while the feminist movement led to more equality and opportunity for women, the masculine nature of engineering, computer science, and the visual arts remained largely intact. The recent falling enrollment and the exodus of women from computer science has shown the depth of the problem. [33] In the arts, Cynthia Rubin believed that digital art “liberated” her from “the prejudice” she faced when she was a woman painter, but then when the computer became more widespread, the “old prejudices” returned. [34] Allen is also ambivalent too, admitting that after thirty years in computing, she is “disappointed at how little has changed.” Being the “only women in the room” and having to “adjust” to male dominance has its cumulative effects. This despondency, which has led to Allen contemplating abandoning her extraordinary career in technology, is shared by other women in computing. [35] Nevertheless, Allen remains optimistic that a new generation of influential women practitioners will emerge. Yet, she warns, those character traits that defined pioneering women artists—determination, tenacity, and a forceful intellect—will remain necessary prerequisites.

Endnotes

1. All artist quotations, unless specified, are recorded from these interviews: Lillian Schwartz, e-mail message to author, May 25, 2004 and December 16, 2011. Anne Spalter, e-mail message to author, January 20, 2005. Sue Gollifer, e-mail message to author, June 1, 2004. Rebecca Allen, interview by author, November 21, 2011. Joan Truckenbrod, e-mail message to author, November 28, 2012. Copper Giloth, interview by author, November 20, 2011. Barbara Nessim, interview by author, November 21, 2011. Grace Hertlein interview by author, December 15, 2011.
2. Judy Wajcman, “Reflections on Gender and Technology Studies,” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 30, no.3, (2000): 447.
3. Jennifer S. Light, “When Computers Were Women,” *Technology & Culture*, Vol. 40, no. 3 (1999): 455-483.
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6. Judy Malloy, preface to, *Women, Art, and Technology*, ed. Judy Malloy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003), xv.
7. Nathan Ensmenger, “Making Programming Masculine,” in *Gender Codes: Why Women Are Leaving Computing*, ed. Thomas J. Misa, (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2010)120.
8. Nathan Ensmenger, *The Computer Boys Take Over: Computers, Programmers, and the Politics of Technical Expertise*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2010), 14.
9. David Alan Grier, “The ENIAC, the Verb “to program” and the Emergence of Digital Computers,” *Annals of the History of Computing*, Vol. 18, no 1, (1996): 51-55.

10. Ensmenger, "Making Programming Masculine," 116.
11. Ensmenger, *The Computer Boys Take Over*, 12.
12. Lois Mandel, "The Computer Girls," *Cosmopolitan* (April 1976): 52-56.
13. Mandel, "The Computer Girls," 51.
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In search of digital feminisms: *Digital Gender & Aesthetic Technology*

Sol Morén

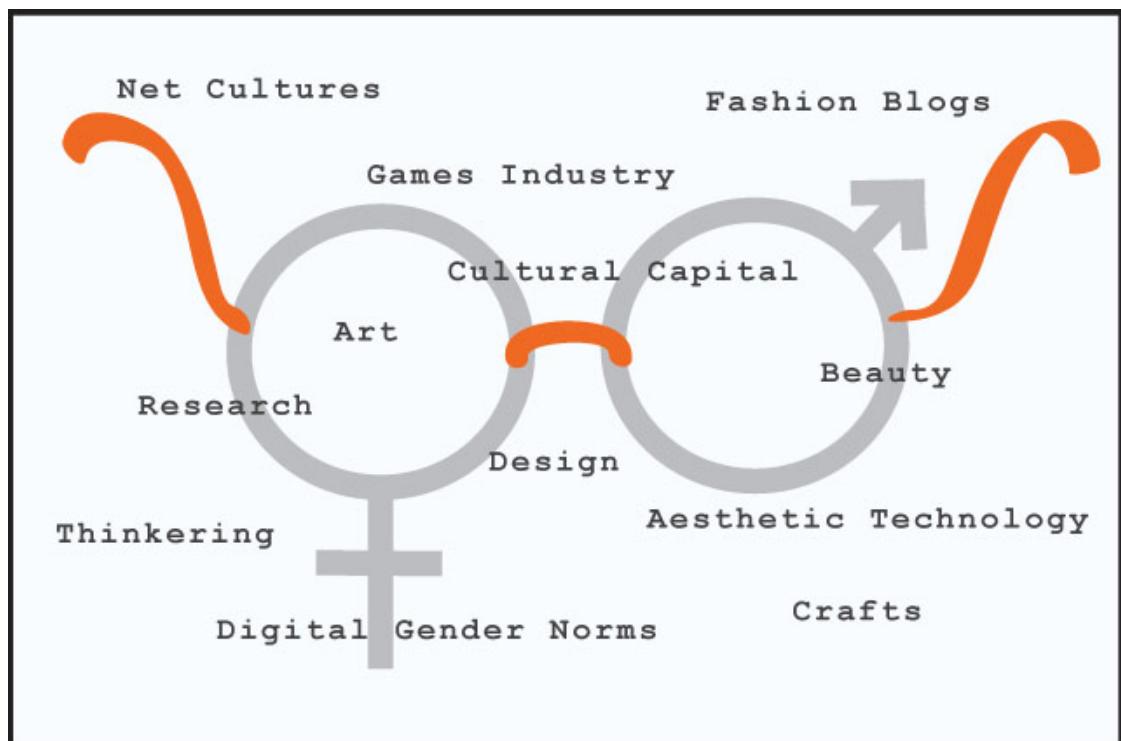


Fig. 1 - Gender Goggles, 2012, Sol Morén, Digital image, © Sol Morén. (Used with permission.)

Abstract

What is it that influences girls' choices of new technology? How is digital creativity affected by gender norms? "Digital Gender & Aesthetic Technology" aims to make visible females as creative developers of the Internet and new technology, through interviews with students, artists, project managers, and entrepreneurs. The prevailing social norms appear to be reflected on the Internet as "digital gender norms," where girls and boys prefer apparently different communication tools. While working with the question of "digital gender," I have developed the hypothesis of "Aesthetic Technology," namely that girls often have an artistic approach towards technology. Girls mainly learn technology for a personal reason, planning to create something once they have learned the technique, and their goal often have aesthetic preferences. The question of girls "becoming technical," is more complicated than one might first think, in relation to gender. Even though young girls are often just as interested in technology as young boys are, it is difficult for them to keep or adapt their technical interest to normative femininity in their teens. Another problem is that expressions of technical competence or innovation, which do not correspond to the predominant male norm, might be hard to recognize. Females who study within the field of creative digital technology often begin their career by struggling with questions of equality, instead of just practicing their profession.

Digital Gender

Fashion blogs or forums for game development on the Internet - which shall I choose? The question may appear to be superfluous - of course I will choose the sites that contain information and discussions about the topic I am most interested in, whether it is fashion or game development. But what happens if a girl becomes interested in game

development, when there are basically only boys on the game development sites? And what would happen to a boy who started his own fashion blog? What would his friends say?

The questions that arise are not unique to the Internet; the same pattern or problem is also found in *homosocial* contexts "in real life" [IRL]. The problem is seen distinctly on the Internet because the Net is supposed to be a, using the term of American social and literary critic Katherine N. Hayles, "disembodied" social meeting place and to some extent thought of as an arena where it ought to be easier for us to put our gender, age and cultural identity aside in order to treat each other more equally. [1] During the early days of the Internet's development, such utopian hopes were expressed by feminist researches like Sherry Turkle and Donna Haraway. [2] However, contemporary Swedish studies have shown that our behaviour on the Internet is not very different from our behaviour in the real/physical world. [3]

The way we behave when communicating on the net though, even when we are not physically visible or audible, can reveal more about our identity than we ourselves can imagine. [4] Social codes that we are not even aware of can expose us. The symbolic or cultural capital, "habitus," which, according to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu we can never escape from, affects our options for choosing which roles we are able to take on in a convincing way, both on the Internet and in a physical setting. [5] The question of which places on the Internet we can conquer and make our own is therefore more complicated than simply being a matter of our interests; different social norms, such as gender norms, are of significance for our freedom of choice.

According to Haraway, as a researcher, it may be difficult to see anything other than the patterns or pictures you expect to find, so in order to make the invisible visible, one must perhaps also make the actual seeing visible. [6] This is why norm critical theories and postmodern feminist analysis have become so important for the analysis and problematizing of my work. [7] According to postmodern feminist theory, based on American philosopher Judith Butler's theories of "performativity," one of the fundamental thoughts behind the term "gender" is that identity is negotiable and is formed and created through everyday actions that are continually repeated, as we "do gender." [8] When someone breaches gender norms, we often find it provocative. In particular, men who deviate from male gender stereotype patterns are often subjected to comments about a presumed non-heterosexual orientation. [9] This may be seen as an example of how our culture's *heteronormativity* affects our freedom of choice when it comes to interests or professions through the identity-forming process. [10] This might explain why there are hardly any male fashion bloggers.

One fundamental idea within contemporary gender theory is that we create differences between the sexes, by categorizing male and female characteristics in opposition to each other. [11] It may seem strange that an interest in fashion or technology should be linked to gender and ultimately to sexuality but when we "do gender" we use "the principle of keeping apart" in order to set up a "gender order." [12] For example, according to "gender order logic," being technical is a male trait-as long as it is not a female trait. If more women would become "technical," there is a risk that the gender order or the "dichotomist order" will begin to break up. By the same logic, a prerequisite of masculinity is that a man is "not a woman." Distancing oneself from anything that can be associated with femininity is a way of "doing" male gender. [13]

Why are girls attracted by seemingly different forms of socializing and communication on the Internet than boys are? According to the facts that emerged through the statistical investigations of what young people do on the Internet, conducted regularly by the Swedish

Media Council, girls who use the Internet are more focused on communication, although this is a conclusion that could be challenged. [14] Being active in blogs and in social forums is one way of communicating, but playing games online could also be seen as a form of communication. Socializing through online gaming is generally done in real-time, where communication is direct and ephemeral. [15] In contrast, words or pictures on a blog remain, requiring more consideration by the person who is communicating. It would appear that it is more common for girls, than for boys, to consider in advance how the things one says and does will be perceived by others. [16] Perhaps it is a reflection of gender norms that, according to Swedish Internet statistics, more girls than boys write blogs while more boys than girls prefer to play or develop games on the Internet. [17]

In order to find out more about digital gender norms and how young women view themselves as the producers of pictures on the Internet, in the spring of 2010, I began to interview girls studying the aesthetic secondary school programs about their use of photography in blogs. [18] To gain a deeper and wider perspective of the significance of gender in regards to creative girls' entry into the field of digital technology, in the autumn of 2010 I continued the research by interviewing two university students and five women who all worked professionally in the field of digital technology. Two of the participants were studying fine art, one was a game designer and researcher; one worked as a photographer and pedagogue; one was a sound artist; two worked as project managers within digital culture and media.

Blog norms

According to the secondary girls I interviewed, fashion bloggers are young girls who can earn money on their blogs because many people follow them. The girls I interviewed expressed respect for certain fashion bloggers, for instance, those who blogged about design rather than just about fashion, and who expressed themselves in a personal way. Other fashion bloggers were described with some contempt because they appeared superficial, self-centred, and provocative. These attributions seem to be linked to the "normative feminine ideals," identified by the English anthropologist Beverly Skeggs in her studies of how young girls behave in order to become "respectable." [19] A few of these female ideals are moderation, control, empathy, and caution. Some of the bloggers seem to live up to these ideals while other bloggers appear to provoke them in a challenging way, which can bring on different kinds of attention from their readers. Generally speaking, it seems that fashion bloggers receive more positive comments and are more respected the closer they stay to the normative feminine ideals, but if they deviate from that norm, they may sometimes attract a larger number of readers.

Commenting is an important part of the blog culture. The upper secondary school girls I interviewed said that they regularly comment on other people's pictures and blogs, not just on those belonging to their closest friends. One of the girls described to me how commenting could be used as a creative tool for building up networks in which one's own blog is strategically woven into part of a larger social network. This strategy of commenting works by attracting new readers to one's own blog, is a way of building up and extending one's own network.

According to the Swedish gender researcher, Fanny Ambjörnsson, the *homosocial* reflecting of one's self—the need to be compared, assessed and appreciated by other girls—is a typical feature of young women's forming of identity. [20] In Swedish fashion blogs, identity is often manifested through fashion, culinary culture, or an interest in design. [21] Girls mostly read other girls' blogs and the secondary school pupils I interviewed mentioned this phenomenon more or less in

passing, as if they had not really reflected on why this was so; to these girls, it only seemed the case that girls in general were more interested in other girls' pictures and narratives.

Even though the Internet is a completely new social field that might be characterized by irrationality, fragmentation, and the breaking up of traditional hierarchies, it would nevertheless seem that most of the youngsters who present themselves on the Net endeavour to appear as "normal" as possible in relation to prevailing gender norms. [22] The feminine gender norm appears to encompass certain common human characteristics but exclude others that do not seem to fit, for instance, outgoing self-confidence or physical aggression. The traits that do not fit in with femininity must be either concealed or be expressed in a different way. Girls have, according to American author Rachel Simmons, special "code words" which are used to set up behaviour norms among themselves in a *homosocial* female network. [23] For instance, an example of that type of coded message is when girls say that other girls "think that they are somebody" meaning between the lines, that they think they are somebody more important than others. According to Simmons, girls can contribute to the maintaining of the predominant gender order by actively repressing each other's self-assertion with the help of various behaviour norms. This often results in girls often being forced to conceal the very behaviour they should need to become successful in a competitive society. Female fashion bloggers risk being subjected to double punishment: partly sexist oppression from males in the form of negative comments; partly contemptuous "coded messages" from other girls. This is perhaps because bloggers, as female entrepreneurs are self-assured, outgoing, and self-assertive-traits that generally do not fit into the feminine norm.

Identity Online

But why do girls and boys choose different forms of socializing on the Net? Why do these *homosocial* environments arise, and why is it so hard to enter the other party's social space? One banal explanation as to why so few girls take part in multiplayer online games could be that there are not so many characters for the girls to identify themselves with, something a project manager whom I interviewed pointed out to me. She argued that games "help to maintain ideals that people in other contexts are trying to break down."

Even if girls can ignore the fact that there is no character with which they can identify, other problems remain in the gaming world. Girls, who choose to take part in multiplayer games, are likely to be met with different forms of discrimination and sexualization on the grounds of assumed gender. [24] Gender related discrimination appears to be a common occurrence when females are in a male-dominated setting no matter whether it's on the Net or IRL. [25] Changing one's gender identity is a strategy sometimes used by girls playing multiplayer games online, in order to avoid discrimination. Endeavouring to be "one of the guys" is a relatively common strategy used by women in male-dominated environments IRL as well. [26]

Although recent research has shown that the Net is a rather gender normative place, there may be new things to be discovered and learned about norms and gender by experimenting with different identities online. [27] Several of my participants have devoted themselves to the artistic examination of the making of gender and the creating of identity on the Net. One of the upper secondary school girls I interviewed described how she had spent several years studying gender-crossing digital identities in different social forums on the Internet. She described how she was treated completely differently depending on whether her "fake user" was as a girl or a boy. She My informant also described how her experiences as different fictive characters had given her new insights into human relationships and

inspiration to create characters in her manuscript writing. One of the art students I interviewed, told me about an artistic project that she had worked on for some years where she created a persona on the Internet that was partly fictive. During that period of her life, her artistic work was made visible solely on the Net. With the help of pictures and narratives, she explored the field in order to create identity and myths about the persona.

Even if a digital change of gender only works in certain ways, it is still a strategy that can give new insights into how identity is created and how normative prejudices work. However, some experience of life is needed in order to successfully change gender or identity on the Internet. It is difficult for young people playing multiplayer games online to fool older players that they are the same age. They rapidly expose themselves because of their lack of social competence. However, it does seem possible for a female player in her late teens, or older, to play under a false male identity without being exposed. The reason why girls choose to do a digital gender swap is because otherwise, as a minority group in online gaming environments, they are likely to be discriminated against. [28] One disadvantage, of concealing their female identity could be the risk that playing and socializing will then be on entirely male normative terms.

Aesthetic Technology

For many young girls blogging is not just about writing some kind of public diary, but a way of communicating identity, style or, using the term of British sociologist Beverly Skeggs, "female cultural capital" through all the possibilities that new media has. [29] Photography and digital image processing is a current growing hobby among young Swedish girls, which proves in the fact that it is, according to my experience, fairly easy to attract female students to such courses in contemporary Swedish online education. Perhaps this is related to the use of the technology in photo blogging. However, fewer female students apply for courses in creative programming. According to several of my interviewees, girls prefer a planned route of learning with a set objective in sight. Girls seem to need to set up a personal goal in order to feel that learning technology is meaningful. When it comes to digital technology, it would appear that the goal is often artistic and the technique is a way of achieving aesthetic expression. In the contemporary Swedish blogging scene, girls communicate mainly with text and photographs in interaction, using pictures which they have produced themselves. Common subjects of girls' blogging are e.g. fashion, food, design or styling, all themes connected to the concept of good taste and commonly expressed with beautiful images in advertisements and magazines.

Seen from a critical perspective, one might assume that there is no gender normative gain in learning technology only for its own sake, as girls are not expected to be "technical" within the stereotype feminine norm. For boys, however, it may be worthwhile learning technology without asking why, or wondering what use they will have of that technology. In the male "hegemonic" or dominating gender norm, technological knowhow is an important trait. [30] Boys are expected to understand all kinds of technological equipment simply because it is part of "being masculine." That may be the reason, why many boys on their own initiative, read through camera manuals or books about programming. [31] It is also common for people to expect that men will spontaneously be able to explore technically advanced equipment without supervision, and understanding it, as if technical knowhow was a "natural" male trait. [32]

Girls seem to "do gender" by communicating and confirming cultural similarity, and thereby creating the networks, that are an important part of the process of forming a feminine identity. [33] Feminine identity is formed on the Net in relation to other users, through

texts and images, where expression of style and taste are continually commented on, reflected and approved, in the first instance, by other girls. During the first half of the 19th century, femininity was linked to "beauty" and different forms of aesthetic expression by an emphasis on appearance and a demand for gracefulness. [34] The contemporary homosocial network seems to be confirmed by young girls still showing each other that they are well informed about what the German 19th- century philosopher Immanuel Kant referred to as "beauty." According to Kant, "beauty" is "beautiful" in more or less the same way as an object that is suited to its purpose; it possesses a "necessary" delight. However, that which is beautiful lacks purpose since it is not intended to be of any use; according to Kant, beauty is founded on an "aesthetic judgement" that is "not logical." [35]

When girls write, take photographs and digitally process their pictures in order to put them on the net, they often present an image of their life that has been adapted and put right. [36] In that perspective, it might be worth the effort and time that it takes to learn advanced digital image processing, as it brings tremendous opportunities to beautify the image of your everyday reality. Aesthetic preferences, or an interest in "beauty," seems to be an important part of the feminine "doing gender." If one uses the dichotomist model for how gender is constructed, gender is then made determined through differences and opposites. Expanding this concept, a lack of interest in beauty, not caring about something's appearance, or holding the opinion that functionality is the most important aspect, could be linked to masculinity.

But perhaps beauty and function are dependent on each other? Ideas like this were expressed back in the 19th century by designer and utopian William Morris, a leader in the English Art and Crafts movement. [37] Could it perhaps even be the case that some people find it difficult to use a digital tool that is "not beautiful," a design that has been created without considering aesthetic preferences, or where too much attention has been paid to function instead of form? Some of my research participants described how they had chosen not to use functional digital technology, precisely because it was "ugly" or "boring."

Trying to understand the issue of "form" or "beauty" in software design, from a gender perspective, I have come up with a hypothesis, which I call "Aesthetic Technology." The term is inspired by the work of the American psychologist Sherry Turkle. [38] In the 1980s, when Turkle studied children who were doing computer programming, she discovered differences in how boys and girls thought and related to the computer. It emerged that the girls had a different approach to the machines and they attached greater value in adding personal features to the programs. This meant they made use of bugs, or allowed errors to remain, since they thought this would make the program and the computer more "alive." According to Turkle, the girls used an "aesthetic programming style," as they thought more like artists. These girls created programs where the code was just as sophisticated as the boys' code, but with completely different solutions. As an intellectual experiment, if we try not to belittle or idealize the traits or interests that are associated with normative femininity, perhaps we can instead find new approaches to how girls handle technology. A starting point could be to examine how they assess, develop, and try to improve existing technology, by using it in novel ways, or in ways that the technology was not initially intended for. One example of this kind of progression would be how female photographers like e.g. Sophie Calle, Barbara Kruger or Cindy Sherman renewed the field of contemporary artistic photography in the 1980s, shifting focus of the media from technical and documentary to conceptual and aesthetical. [39]

How do girls learn new technology?

In a learning situation, it is sometimes apparent that boys and girls use different strategies when it comes to learning new technology. With some prejudice, it can be said that girls learn new technology by asking for help, while boys look for the answers themselves on the Net. Girls are more focused on learning technology through a dialogue than boys are. [40] Males tend to spend more time "tinkering" as in playfully investigating new interfaces on their own, than females do, when the task is to solve problems using digital software. [41] Several of the women I interviewed, who themselves have experience from running courses, describe a phenomenon of gender differences in learning strategies. For some reason, it seems to be more difficult for girls to take the initiative to search themselves for answers on the Net. However, several of the girls I talked to described how liberating it had been, when they suddenly realized that all the information they needed, was in fact available on the Internet. Perhaps it is a matter of habit, insight, or being informed; perhaps, it is a matter of changing gender-linked stereotype patterns of learning.

Getting stuck and having technical problems seems to be a rather common problem when females try to teach themselves advanced digital technology and do not have adequate support, and the gender-related expectations that "girls are not able to learn new technology" might take over. The female game designer whom I interviewed told me that it is very common for girls to drop out of the game design study programs before graduating and very few girls apply for and get a job within the field after completing their studies. She also told me about her experiences from her time as a game design student. The study program included a course in game programming which she did not pick up as fast as the boys did, as many of them had previous experience in programming. When she told the course leaders that she was considering dropping out of the programming course, she was not offered extra support. Rather, they supported her dropping the course, by explaining that she would still pass the study programme as a whole. She told me that she decided to drop out of the programming course because it felt meaningless to sit through lessons where the level of teaching was way above the level she was at.

Recent studies done by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate show that expectations from teachers influence to a high degree how pupils perform. [42] In this case, we must consider what expectations we have regarding women's technical knowledge, and how that affects female students in game design programs. One of the participants described her experiences from a course in stage technology. Every time she had a technical problem and asked for help, she had to point out that she wanted to be taught how to solve the problem, otherwise the teachers just quickly solved the technical problem for her without telling her how it was done. With that sort of pedagogy, "asking for help" does not result in any learning process, and if boys are used to being treated like that by their technology teachers, it is not surprising that they prefer to search for answers to problems themselves.

Digital Gender order

Computers are nice, clean machines that do not make a noise and you do not have to be physically strong in order to program them. Even so, almost exclusively men populate the gaming industry. In 2009, 90% of the employees in the Swedish gaming industry were males. [43] The gaming industry can be viewed as part of the larger field of technology, which has traditionally been regarded as a masculine field, just like the field of natural sciences. [44] One way of studying male-dominated fields is to look at them as *power fields*, an approach adopted by the French sociologist Michel Foucault. [45] *Power fields* are constructed and preserved by a certain group of people marking out the field in various ways as being their territory, in relation to "the others" who do not fit in. One of the problems with

digital equality might be that women view technology in a different way than men, and that women's views and ideas about technology often are ignored. It is not only men who maintain the gender order—much of the resistance to change lies with the women's own view of themselves. [46] Reducing or belittling one's own competence is a common expression of female subordination, and this probably happens at a subconscious level. When I asked my female participants to describe their technical knowhow, the answers I received indicated that they themselves do not rate their knowledge very highly. This is something that is apparent in both students' and professionals' descriptions of their own technical competence.

Women in our society handle and use technology daily but, generally speaking, women do not describe their own competence as being particularly technical, perhaps precisely because technology has such a strong link to masculinity. [47] Masculine and feminine traits are rated differently and a "hierarchical gender order" often means female competence and female-dominated fields are belittled. [48] There have been some pedagogical attempts to teach female students technology by educating them in special women classes. Although the girls in the test-group performed better in the *homosocial* learning environment, they would nevertheless not choose an "all female" technical education, because that kind of course of study would have lower status and there would be a risk that employers would view it as being inferior. [49]

One of the girls I interviewed expressed similar anxiety that the hierarchical gender order, could lead to courses intended "only for girls" being marked as inferior to courses that are aimed at both girls and boys. Generally speaking, girls are not prepared to attend "technology girl schools" even if they would actually learn more. [50] The problem is probably a structural dilemma where female-dominated areas in general are awarded lower status in accordance with the principle of hierarchical gender order. This means that a masculine coded field is rated higher than a feminine coded field. There is a risk that the masculine coded field will be weakened and lose status when women begin to encroach on it. Men who work within a masculine coded field easily end up in a situation where they join forces to defend their field from intruders, a defense probably working on an seemingly "instinctive," or subconscious level. [51]

There are many different factors that make it hard for girls to penetrate a male-dominated area like digital technology. Through my interviews, however, I have met several women who have been very determined to working within the field of creative digital technology. When their childhood and adolescence were mentioned, it was clear that their parents had supported and encouraged their interest in technology. These women have high self-confidence and have completed technical study programs. After finishing their education, they had applied for jobs in the field but were treated with polite skepticism and, after many interviews and some project work, were not able to establish themselves at any existing companies. In order to be able to do any kind of work at all connected to their education, these women have instead been forced to set up their own organization, often with the help of other women in a similar situation. Several of my participants have been working as managers of their own projects. Instead of just getting a job in the new creative technology arena, related to their studies, they had to start off by trying to create their own opportunities, necessary prerequisites for women in general, to be able to compete in the male-dominated labor market. It would appear that having personal experience of gender discrimination could, at best, be a starting point for women to initiate equality projects and act as entrepreneurs.

Conclusion

The gender norms that prevail in society appear to be reflected in the Net cultures of young people, as "digital gender norms." The communication of girls and boys on the Internet is manifested in different forms of socializing, linked to *homosocial* gender norms, even though the Net is a meeting place that is supposed to be "disembodied." Boys dominate online gaming environments, and girls seem to prefer the blogosphere. Blogging could be viewed as a new type of female entrepreneurship with users who continually develop new creative strategies for network communication.

While working with the question of "digital gender," I have developed the hypothesis of "Aesthetic Technology," namely that girls often have an artistic approach towards technology. Girls often choose to learn technology for a purpose, planning to create something with that special technique, and their goal often have aesthetic preferences. One example is the common use of digital photography within the blog culture, where girls learn advanced image processing in order to beautify the image of their everyday life.

For a girl to "become technical" is problematic, according to the crossing of gender norms. Even though young girls are often just as interested in technology as young boys are, it is more difficult for them to retain and fit their interest in technology into the normative femininity that they are expected to adapt to, as they go through puberty and enter the adult world.

The female creators whom I have interviewed all had long-term experience working in technical fields such as digital technology, web development and the gaming industry, yet they do not describe themselves as being particularly technical. When it comes to technical knowhow, there are normative expectations regarding how technical competence should be expressed. Knowledge or innovations which are manifested in a way that is not in line with the dominant norm are often not made visible.

Since it is hard for females to establish themselves in the existing male-dominated corporate culture, girls who study within the field of creative digital technology are often forced to begin their career by working with questions of equality, instead of practicing and forging ahead in their profession. At best, they become entrepreneurs who, together with other female creators, run innovative projects that in the long run expand their professional field. My hope is that the result of this work will contribute to this new growing field of research in digital cultures, where questions concerning gender in creative digital technology will be problematized, in search of a new digital feminism.

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BOT I

Praba Pilar

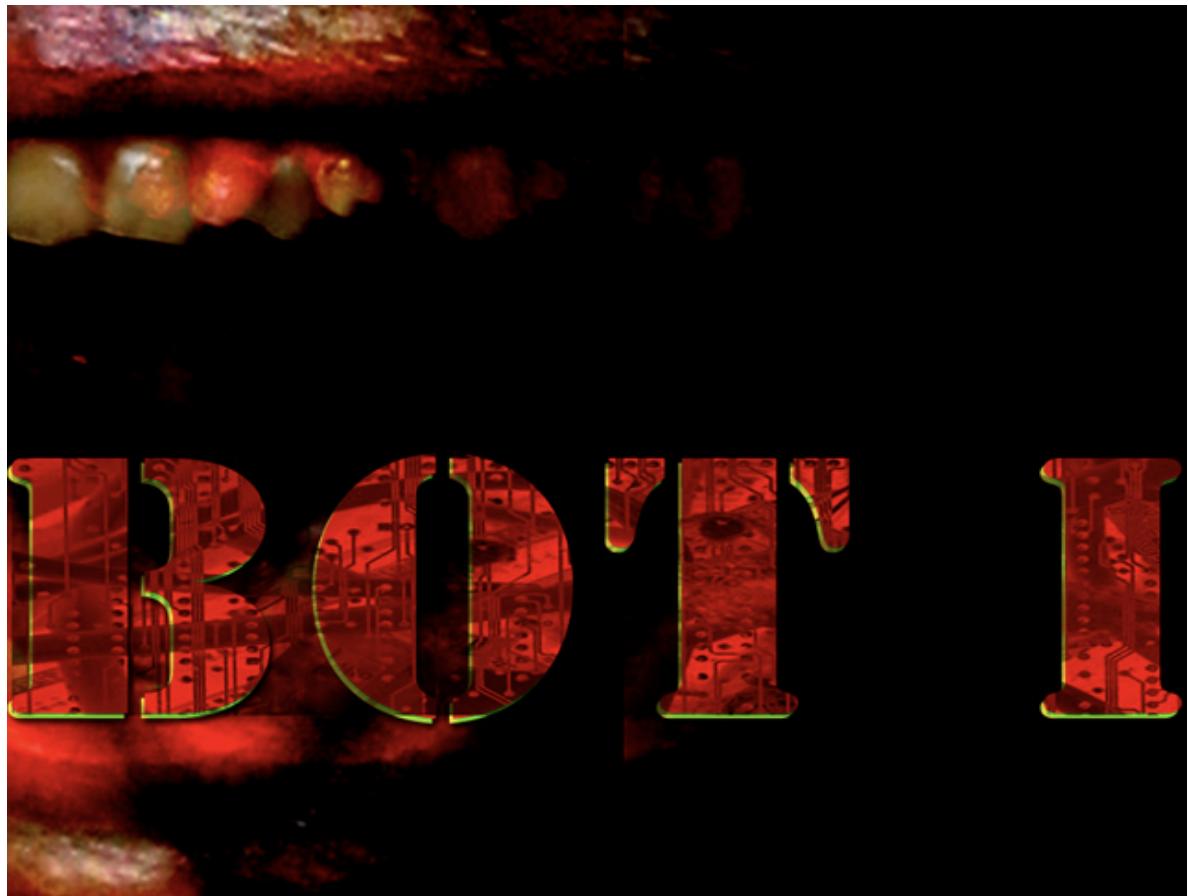


Fig. 1. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, digital print © Praba Pilar

A monologue ripping through the patriarchal and masculinist meat body discourse I hear at the Nanotechnology, Biotechnology, Information Technology, and Cognitive Neuroscience convergence conferences, meetings, and symposia I regularly attend. I am always astounded to witness the sea of aged white men postulate on the contemptible wet ware of the human body as a machinic interface that needs to rapidly be transformed and uploaded to hardware. These dying men volubly declare their new/old vision of a shifted birthright: the permanent overcoming of the illnesses, plagues, pains, and excretions of the human body; an overthrow of physical limitations that keep us trapped in the dimensionality of the senses; and finally, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual immortality in this imagined age of spiritual machines, to be unlocked by and intended for the chosen ones, once they find the right algorithm.



Fig. 2. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Cisco (Used with permission.)

A monologue slashing through white male mythology, the flattening of difference for a discursive standardization of humanity into middle class white male desire. A refusal of the legitimization of white Western myths of rationality, advancement, modernity, superiority clung to by the agents of neoliberal techno-advancement.



Fig. 3. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Cisco (Used with permission.)

A monologue referencing the real, the imagined, the invisible: Jackie Orr's Panic Diaries [1]; the future cunt of the VNS Matrix Manifesto

for the 21st Century [2]; the predominantly male and white conferences of the Foresight Nanotechnology Institute in Silicon Valley [3]; popular futurist and author Ray Kurzweil's [4] view that human uploads to advanced computing mechanisms is a "natural" evolution; the Methuselarian Foundation leader Aubrey de Grey and his Longevity Escape Velocity concept [5] wherein human aging, and concomitant death, will be escaped; the increased rate of online trafficking of women for sexual exploitation, through enforced prostitution.

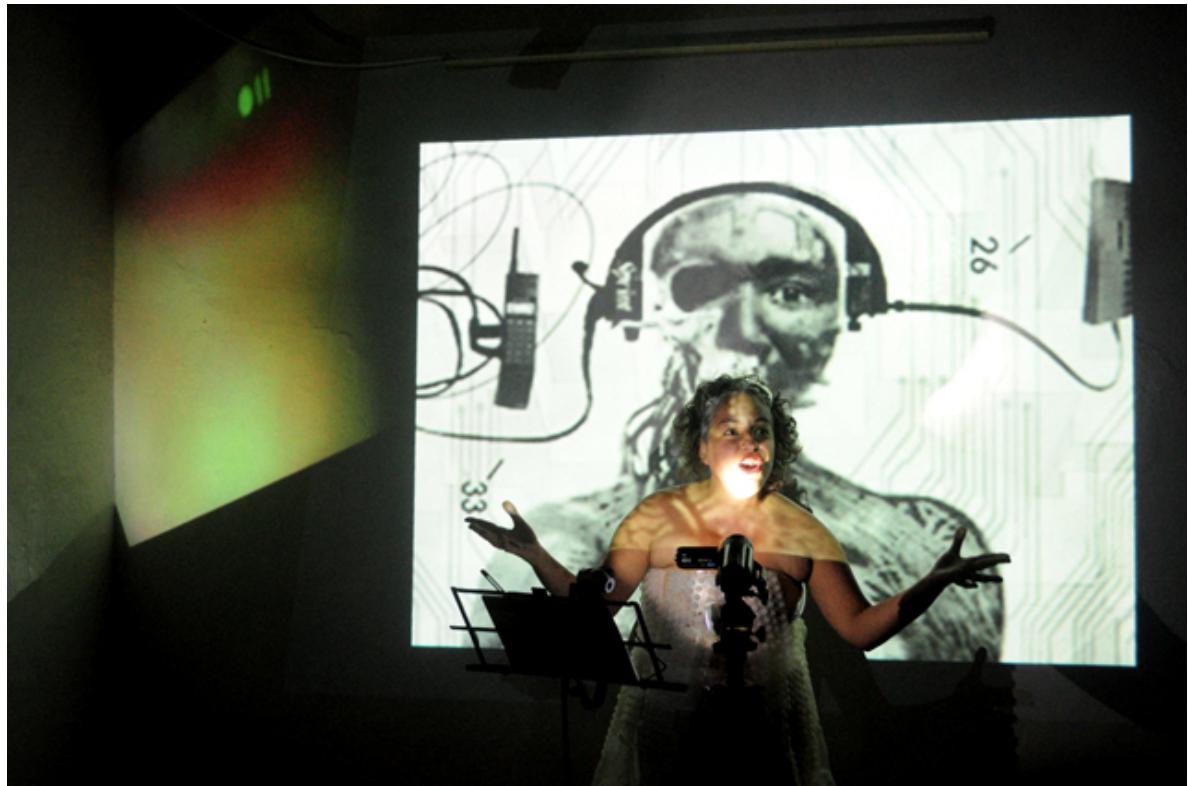


Fig. 4. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Cisco (Used with permission.)

A monologue constructed through Althusser's "interpellation," [6] drawing out the ideological constitution, interpellation and hailing of the subject in order to examine how technology functions as a mechanism of control in the advanced capitalist society of the United States. Subjects are not aware of the ideological constructs by which they are hailed. New developments, new products, new technological fixes fit within a celebratory matrix of discourse which is fundamentally an extension of progress narratives and ideas of Western expansion. I situate my own tensions with hailing and with the inside/outside of ideology as it applies to technocapitalism.



Fig. 5. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Cisco (Used with permission.)

It came to me one day, this biting monologue uncoiling in angry retort. I was spewing on my contradictory feelings, experiences, and history with techno-capitalist culture, on my alienation and disenchantment, my addiction and my erotic charge. Hate, love, love, hate, love, hate, hate.



Fig. 6. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Janet Sarson (Used with permission.)

I had been watching, in hypnotic reflection, a YouTube video of Samuel Beckett's 1972 play "Not I." [7] I was fascinated by the profound alienation in the piece, the disembodiment, the rant, the story, the broken, repetitive, circling, non-linear narrative. I was riveted by the twisting, wretched mouth, the spitting out of words. I needed to do an interpretation of "Not I" based on my own techno-alienation.



Fig. 7. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Janet Sarson (Used with permission.)

My alienation comes out of the violent contradictions between the benefits and the damaging, often hidden effects of military, political, economic, social, and environmental applications of emerging technologies. These contradictions have deeply disturbed me for the last decade and a half, and have caused me to create numerous artistic and activist projects to generate a counternarrative to the utopian rhetoric of the techno-capitalist revolution.

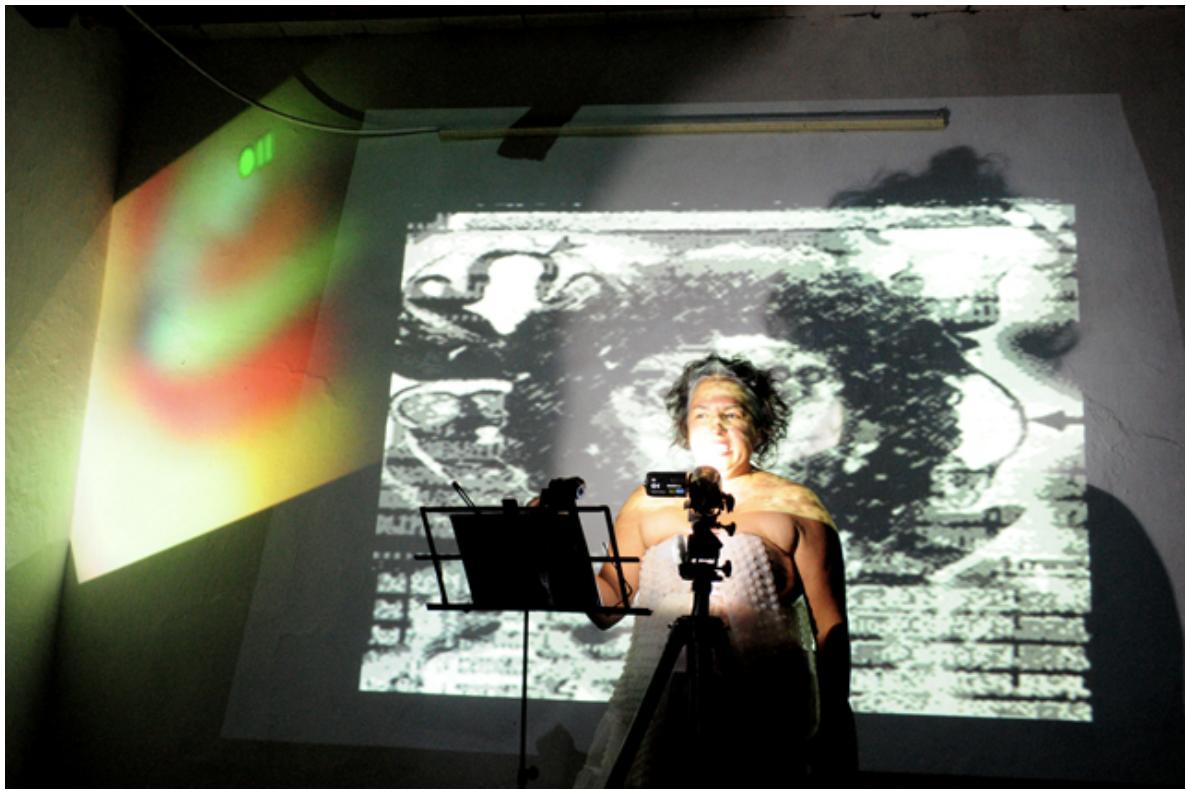


Fig. 8. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Cisco (Used with permission.)

In the midst of this artistic epiphany, media artist Adriene Jenik invited me to present a two-minute performance as part of her project *Open_borders: Improvisation Across Networks, Distance, Timezones* at the *Actions of Transfer Conference* of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics at UCLA [8]. Her project was a web-based international performance event wherein performances from around the Americas would be web cast and streamed into a lounge at UCLA on the Saturday night of the conference. All the performances had to be done in front of a webcam. Perfect timing.



Fig. 9. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Cisco (Used with permission.)

I began with the lines from *Not I*, “out into this world... this world... tiny little thing... before its time...” and told my own story, my birth into a computer family, my early introduction to the *materia prima* of electronics, my later disillusionments working as a technologist, my love of instant communication, my disgust with military applications. As I spoke the words, I stuffed computer wiring into my mouth until the wiring deformed my mouth and I was left uttering incoherently. I watched this brief sketch projected on the wall of the lounge, and decided to develop it into a full-length piece, referencing many of the ideas and arguments, the hidden histories, the rebels and usurpers, of the tech-revolution.



Fig. 10. *BOT I*, 2011, Praba Pilar, performance still © Cisco (Used with permission.)

The 25-minute monologue **BOT I** draws on the texts of *Not I* by Beckett and *I Robot*, by Isaac Asimov [9]. Below is the script of the performance I presented at the Radical Philosophy Association Conference in Eugene, Oregon on November 13, 2010 [10].

Out... Into this world... this world... tiny little thing... before its time... Born in a cab racing to the hospital... five pounds and tiny... seeking out the world... falling in the hands of... father... father... father... father of life... padre de todas las fuerzas... padre amado... padre sagrado... cut my umbilical cord and introduced me to a world... bits... bytes... processor... coding... programming... network... binary... and I fit right in... I fit right in I tell you, playing with the little cogs... the little spidery cogs... parts... chips... data entry cards... electronic... all the way from Taiwan... Father... fathers... father... STOP... CODE BLUE... CODE BLUE... he would give me everything I wanted... Connect

me all over the world... spread me further than ever.... Ooze me into the ionosphere... baby cyborg born into this world... el Nuevo Mundo.... I would reach the zenith... analog to digital communion... Commune... commune... orgy of telepresence... WHY! WHY! WHY am I here all alone? Mega... Giga... Tera... Peta... Exa... Zetta... I want to be a cloud... a computing cloud... everywhere and nowhere at once... I was born for the new world order... speed up my mathematics... give me software, software, replace this wetware.... Garage band symphonics... Singularity... Bioprospecting... Mechanosynthesis... A computer in every pot! Back me up baby... Put me on the remote server... speed me up... I'm ready for takeoff into the hyperbolic longevity escape velocity... I'm ready for Methuselarity... I'm ready for... WAIT! The little children, the little children... WHAT?.... Yes, little children... girls, boys, scraps... in my dreams... soft delicate skin... maybe 4? laughing and playing... playing Lego with digital parts... Are you 4? Picking through the breasts... little villages... standing on stacks of parts, digital dream... Picking through... Picking through WHAT? cadmium, beryllium, lead... Chinese villages... sucking brominated flame retardant breasts... WHY WHY WHY must my dreams be saturated... The children... Rivers of Toxins... WHAT?... CODE BLUE... CODE BLUE... NO!.. You were going to clean up the world... Give us the paperless office... give us the power to fix... to fix at a higher intelligence... 700 hazardous chemicals in one little fix, not the fix I have in mind... But they're recycling... pero es un cuento sin fin... story never told... Ewaste stream north west... now south east... hazardous material... Boats of detritus... STOP... meat body, meat ware, wetware... he hates the meat body... father, father, father, incestor and abuser... schizophrenic and full with promise... the promise to live in the mind... yes... no body... new thoughts... new paradigms... new thresholds.... Beyond the body, exploding a new frontier and then POOF Descartes! WHAT? I tell you Descartes... it was nothing new... filthy hatred of my body, my five pound body... threshold to transcend into a binary mapping of dendrites... Filthy body... leaky disruptive body... oozing obsolescence... STOP... CODE BLUE... CODE BLUE... I must become more efficient... MILITARY IDEOLOGY... human efficiency machine folding at longevity escape velocity... regeneration... back me up on your servers... transcend the body, my body, what body... all reason... all rationality... todo en la mente... mentation... depravation... sensory overlord... and I rise up with Sadie... I am the future cunt... The future cunt that will not upload... will not artificial... will not intelligence... will not go... I saw a rat, a rat I tell you... an ugly filthy rat in rotting ruins... chewing on the fetid minds of the smartest computer scientists with their robotic processing machines... against the laws... the three laws... Asimov, you are not presente! WHAT? a robot may not injure a human being... a robot you said... cannot allow a human being to come to harm... WHAT? a robot must obey orders... orders, disorders, borders... given by human beings... a robot must protect PROTECT... its own existence... WHAT? Ohhh

no hurting humans... I get you Asimov! Asimov! Where were you when DARPA came in... DARPA... WHAT? Defense Advanced Research Project Agency... Defense? Defense of WHAT? Advanced Research, into WHAT? DARPA was right on top of my body... DARPA my nemesis... ruination of visions... out into this world... tiny little thing... Now tentacles reaching into every lab... universities... research departments... robotic scientists... all over the world... DARPA... you are the pulse of robotics... there is nothing without you... killing machines... started small... tiny little thing... giganormous... forty three... now you fucked up... forty three countries military robotics... WHY? WHY? WHY?... you don't biomedical, you don't surgical, you don't telesurgery... DOG... WHAT? yes, DOG! DOG carries the burdens on the battle field... taken away our birthright... killers... killing machines...you negate me....Mega... Giga... Tera... Exa... Zetta... I saw the men... white, elite, masters of the universe... planning the future... leaving me out... WHY WHY WHY were there no other people there... WHY... I spied on you... to see your flesh... creamy... and fatigued... I joined Foresight... WHAT? Foresight Nanotechnology Institute.. Nano Bio Info Cogno convergence meetings.. I've seen your talks... End all poverty... end material want... provide everything for all... for everyone... in the world... WHAT?... I want this this this... I want this to be true... then I saw the men... implosions, negations, cruelty... no brethren there... no sisters... No no no, just white men, so elite, so rich... Nanophotonics... plasmonics... spreading the white male myth... in the technological arena... but you are so mistaken... I don't want to be a middle class white man... I don't want your rationality... ME CAGO EN TUS ZAPATOS... soy de Colombia... magical realism... indigenous plantations... vida sagrada... ritmos del sol... I am only good data... good plasma... I am your DNA sources... WHAT? DNA source... yes porque un buen indio, es un indio explotado... Biopiracy... bioprospecting... intellectual property... north south dynamics... Columbus, PRESENTE... rising... from the grave... Columbus I see you now so clearly... your new world order... disorder... gold rush... I see your Neem tree thefts... WHAT? You fuck me... taking and taking and taking... take me... take me... place me... spread me... connect me... dilate me... Make me... nothing outside of the new world border... Online... connected... Connected connected connected... Skyping my girl and losing myself into the data flow... erotics, pleasure, play... high speed sousveillance... somatic mutation.... Skype me into the orgasmic flow... a little critter moving through the world... a better life... online job market... she goes... she participates... joins this new world frontier... trust... desperation.... grind... and POOF... hell hole bordello... taken south east now west north... seventeen Johns a day... seventeen fucking Johns... rape, abduction, meat market... caught up... deportation... WHAT? Moving bodies... not telepresente... fresh innocent body... A tiny little thing... born into this world... this online world... meat flesh bodies... pimps and gps tags shot into bodies... tag those whores... you always know where they are... but it's a connection... Real dolls and bioprinting... online women... brutal rape... rape...

thousands trafficked ... girl... born in Russia... now in England... girl... born in la Republica Dominicana... now in Boston... girl, born in Brazil... now in Madrid... what is this new world order, border, disorder... body dilated... pulsated... videotronic... finding myself in the webcam repetitions... The webcam imitations, replication... Touching you around the world... WHAT? Telepresente baby... I'm here, I'm there, I'm everywhere... tiny little thing... born into this world... this social network... take me, lose me, prove me... brother are you online? Sister can you connect? NEGATRON... why are you not here? I know you exist... brown meat... dark meat... why can't you read me? Don't you speak English? Lingua franca... lingua extendida... Where are you? Where is your fiber optic presence? WHAT?... online penetration limited bandwidth... Territorial limits... but wait... WHO? Who is there?... I know you exist... meat... excluidos... desaparecidos... WHERE ARE YOU? Internet logics... digital delusions... moving bodies... transtime, transspace... transcend time space... NO: telepresencia... NO: binary coding... infinite trick... who am I in it... Disaffected? who are you... Disconnected... am I alone here? Am I alone?

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Meditations on the Multiple: On Plural Subjectivity and Gender in Recent New Media Art Practice

Jillian Hernandez

Sept. 8, 71

I have no identity.

I have an approximate mathematical Identity (birthchart.)

I have several names*.

I will give up my (search for) identity As a deadend investigation.

I will make myself empty To receive cosmic info.

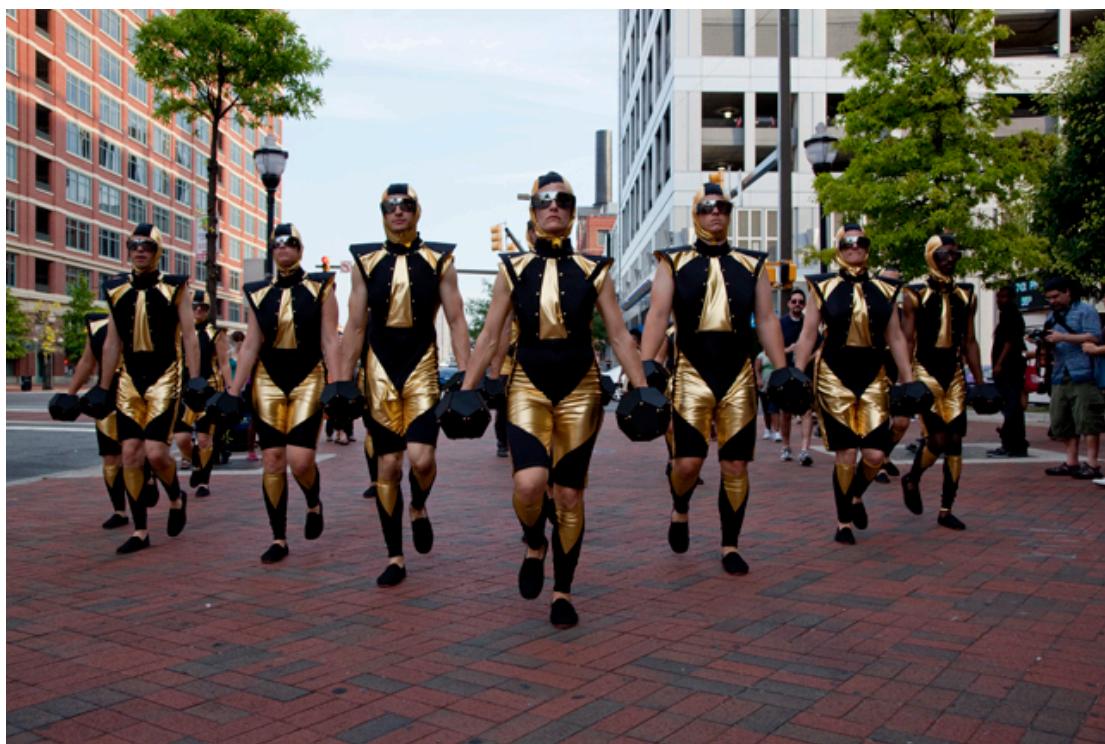
I will renounce the artist's Ego, the supreme test without Which battle a human could not Become "of knowledge."

I will be human first, artist Second.

I will not seek fame, publicity, or success.

Identity changes continuously as Multiplied by time. (identity is a Vector.)

**On roof after I write this, Cindy tells me that "Lozano (the name) snapped off."*



C'mon Baltimore, Everybody Suz-ercise!, 2010, Susan Lee-Chun, still of public performance in Baltimore, MD

In this text I revisit a multi-venue exhibition I co-curated with Susan Richmond, a professor of Art History at Georgia State University and independent curator Cathy Byrd. *Losing Yourself in the 21st Century* explored

how contemporary women artists articulate notions of gendered subjectivity through new media in a social context where notions of a singular and stable self are constantly undermined through the now widespread negotiation of multiple identities that people experience online. [1] We developed a blog that was utilized as a call for participation for the exhibition and also as a platform through which we could engage in dialogue with the artists and for the artists to respond to each other's work. The blog also served as a particularly useful tool for a feminist project such as *Losing Yourself*, as it afforded transparency to the collaborative curatorial process. We selected thirteen artists to feature in exhibitions at the Welch Gallery at Georgia State University in Atlanta (October-December 2009) and Maryland Art Place in Baltimore (February-March 2010). The artists included were Ali Prosch, Susan Lee Chun, Katherine Behar, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, Amber Hawk Swanson, Noelle Mason, Saya Woolfalk, kate hers, Shana Moulton, Amber Boardman, Stacia Yeapanis, Renetta Sitoy, and Milana Braslavsky.

Most of the artists in the show troubled conventional notions of selfhood as authentic and knowable not through obliteration, but through proliferation. Ali Prosch performed as and interacted with three different versions of "herself" in *Match*; Katherine Behar multiplied and cloned her body in *Pipecleaner* the screensaver; and kate hers performed as both herself and an anonymous pregnant schoolgirl in her video/street intervention *Noh-Chim*. Other artists in the exhibition such as Amber Hawk Swanson, Susan Lee Chun, and Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum also proliferated themselves as doubles, triples, clones, and alter-egos.

How does gender shape these strategies of multiplication? What are the implications for how we think the nexus of feminism, identity, embodiment, and the contingent implementation of digital art practice? Perhaps contemporary women-identified artists find perverse assemblages of subjectivity and subjectlessness productive for cultural critique; amalgams of bodies, intensities, sensations, and affects that disturb the coherence of any one self. [2] I will engage these questions through a fragmented format that includes dialogue from the *Losing Yourself* blog and e-mail exchanges with the artists. Rather than develop and defend an argument, I am interested in presenting and mediating this material in order to provoke thoughts and theories in the reader, and will articulate my speculations and meditations throughout the text. This methodology privileges multivocality by foregrounding the ideas of the artists.

Irigaray and Plural Female Subjectivity

Before discussing the *Losing Yourself* projects in detail, I would like to bring the work of French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray into the discussion to help frame the issue of gender and subjectivity. One of Irigaray's major claims is that "woman" is in the process of becoming. Women have not been able to know themselves due to the dominance of phallocentrism in language, which hinders the articulation of sexual difference, making masculinity the "one" gender identity. Women can only express themselves with the linguistic tools developed in phallocentric culture. Without having access to her own subjectivity, woman has served as the "other" that affirms man's notion of (him)self. The implication here is that women have never had a self to lose in the first place, as the position of self has been the privileged locus of phallocentric subjectivity and power.

This appears to have been understood by American artist Lee Lozano in the untitled conceptual text piece of 1971 that I quote at the beginning of this text, which expresses the futility of a search for a "true" or "core" self/identity. Lozano is known for her self-imposed ban on speaking to women that began in the same year and was planned to last for one month and instead continued until she died in 1999. Lozano's boycott of women has perplexed art critics, and various speculations have been advanced about her reasons for doing so, including her alleged desire to align herself with men in the art world in order to benefit from their dominant position, or because she felt alienated by feminism. I posit that Lozano profoundly realized how it is impossible for women to speak, even to each other, in the context of phallocentric culture and that she decided to remove herself from the corrupt politics of what scholar Gayle Rubin has termed the "sex/gender system," just as she removed herself from the politics of the New York art world in *Dropout Piece* in 1970.

Irigaray's notion that the singular self is a product and inheritance of male domination presents the possibility that woman's subjectivity can be theorized as critically perverse and multiple, not the "one" of phallocentric power but as "at least two" that is in the process of becoming. In her essay "When Our Lips Speak Together" she develops the metaphor of vaginal lips to theorize female subjectivity as multiple. Lips are two pieces of flesh always in a state of touching, neither open nor closed. In "When Our Lips Speak Together" Irigaray employs an experimental mode of writing that generates multiple voices to disrupt the syntax of phallocentric language and to allow for alternative, feminist productions of meaning. In the following passage she evokes the plurality of female subjectivity,

"Open your lips: don't open them simply. I don't open them simply. We-you/I- are neither open nor closed. We never separate simply: a single word cannot be pronounced, produced, uttered by our mouths. Between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth. One is never separable from the other. You/I: we are always several at once. And how could one dominate the other? impose her voice, her tone, her meaning? One cannot be distinguished from the other; which does not mean that they are indistinct." [3]

Being "always several at once" can allow feminized subjects to speak and act their identities beyond the confines of phallocentrism. Irigaray has been criticized for posing essentialist claims about female subjectivity that are grounded in a normative female body. However, in Irigaray's work the body is a tool for thinking, not a biological truth that can unlock the core of a female self. The "woman" she addresses in her work can be any feminized subject (which can include queer men). She has discussed how phallocentric language has facilitated male "self-affection" through the affirmation of their privileged subjectivity. Scholar Carolyn Burke describes "When Our Lips Speak Together" as an imagined discourse for female lovers that troubles the status of men as self same and the standard of sameness at the expense of female self-knowledge. [4] In conjuring the sensuous lips that inspire her essay Irigaray performs female self-affection. She writes,

"What we would want to put into play, then, is a syntax that would make woman's 'self-affection' possible. A "self-affection" that would certainly not be reducible to the economy of the sameness of the One, and for which the syntax and the meaning remain to be found." [5]

In this passage we find Irigaray foregrounding the indeterminacy of female subjectivities, not positing an essentialist argument. Although much theoretical work on female subjectivity has been published long after Irigaray's text (originally published in 1977), I find her notions of plurality and self-affection uniquely provocative for thinking the multiplicity of female selves in the *Losing Yourself in the 21st Century* exhibition. Although few of the artists in the exhibition relate their work directly to feminism, how can we understand the ways in which the multiple female bodies and voices in their work articulate meanings that disrupt phallocentric understandings of self? What are the pleasures and pains that attend their production of multiple subjects?

Danger Zones: Performing the Gendered & Racialized Body



Match, 2009, Ali Prosch, live multi-media performance including video projection, audio, costumes, props, colored lights, dimensions variable, © Ali Prosch.

Self-affection and engagement with plural female selves is not inherently pleasurable. Through various warm-ups, costume changes, and rounds of boxing, spectators watched as Los Angeles-based artist Ali Prosch embodied and performed differing versions of herself and witnessed the violent, exhausting, and painful struggle of critical self assessment, which often entails encountering oneself as an antagonistic other. Prosch presented a performance for the *Losing Yourself* exhibition at Georgia State University titled Match, in which she engaged in a grueling 12-minute boxing fight with a large-scale projection of herself.

Prosch staged the performance as a spectacular event. The room was darkened to highlight the glow sticks strewn throughout the floor, strings of pulsating

lights, projections of fireworks, and smoke. The performance space also included a rack on which hung the costumes she donned for various phases of the performance—the intro where she sang *Danger Zone*, a song made popular by the film *Top Gun* (1986); the warm up period; and the match itself. During the fight, Prosch and her projected egos heckled each other and called each other bitches. At times the dynamics being performed were humorous, at others, disturbing, especially as Prosch's body was showing signs of stress and exhaustion.



Match, 2009, Ali Prosch, live multi-media performance including video projection, audio, costumes, props, colored lights, dimensions variable, © Ali Prosch.

Jillian Hernandez: Ali, I was thinking about *Match* a lot in the days after it was performed. When we first talked about the project, I thought it was a great, even comical idea. Various Alis duking it out in amazing costumes. For me, the concept very much stayed at the level of irony and humor. There was serious content there as far as your exploration of self-conflict, but the staging of it, the lights, rugs, costumes, made it seem as if the performance was something ironically theatrical, and not really personal. However, once

you started singing *Danger Zone* and I could hear the nervousness in your voice, I realized just how vulnerable you were making yourself. I also had similar feelings during the fight scene, some parts were hilarious to me, and I wanted to make sure that you could hear me laughing because the audience was so silent, and not giving off much energy for you to work with. At other times though, I wanted it to end. There were moments where the actions seemed to take you somewhere outside the realm of performance and somewhere in (or outside) yourself, Ali, the artist, and it seemed really painful. Were you in a "Danger Zone"? What have your thoughts been about the performance, now two years later? How would you describe the interactions between your subjectivity as Ali the person/artist and those projected Alis who were your enemies?

Ali Prosch: At the time, I was into ideas of the self, specifically the idea of a "true" self. I think we have several selves and they are all as "real" as the next. If everything is constructed through language, e.g. gender, nature, religion, identity, then I wanted to question the idea of authenticity. I created a multiphase performance to touch upon all of this. I moved in and out of the different characters and phases: Ali the performer, Ali—the artist, Ali—the fighter, Ali—the woman, Ali—the limited body.

I didn't necessarily consider my projected selves as my enemies. They were all part of me, conflicts included. I wasn't interested in creating a hierarchy amongst the different selves. Rather, reflect on how people move in and out of personas on a daily basis and investigate how context and environment produces that shift. We perform ourselves everyday and I intended for the live costume changes and theatricality to represent this. Singing to Kenny Loggin's *Danger Zone* (1986) and then warming up to the *Rocky* theme song (1976) also became a means of inserting comedy, irony, and self-effacement into the performance itself.

More than a year later, I now realize how incredibly intense the piece was and how displaying that type of vulnerability may have been too much for the audience. I think it could have been so severe that I actually isolated them. I wanted people to react, have a visceral experience, laugh and be affected. I think it was so personal and awkward at times that the audience just froze and didn't react at all. Somewhere along the lines, it seemed that they were conflicted between a "right" and "wrong" response. I wanted the piece to challenge the parameters of performance art, but I definitely didn't want to alienate the group. In hindsight, if I were to re-perform the piece, it would be quite different. I would remove the first two phases and just hold the boxing match with myself for as long as I possibly could, further pushing the element of physical endurance and the intensity of the body in motion. I would also make my projected selves larger than life—to the point of absurdity, 50 feet high on the side of a building. [6]

Perhaps the silence was productive. The affective intensity of the performance could have confounded the compulsory desire to articulate a proper or improper reaction, creating a disturbance in language through affect. Prosch's performance can be thought of as presenting not just an event so uncomfortable and spectacular that the spectator is stunned silent, but also as presenting an opportunity for the viewers to meditate and lose themselves, or think the multiplicity of themselves through the performance. The incapacity of language for articulating the pleasures and pains of "being subject" are also explored by Berlin-based artist kate hers in her film *Noh-Chim*, which documents her personal search for origins in Korea.



Noh-Chim (missing), 2005-2006, kate hers, digital video-social intervention, Seoul, Korea, © 2006

Unlike many adoptee narratives that work from a notion of reunification of the self with one's biological family, the artist's juxtaposition of archival footage and documentation of her street performances as a pregnant school girl in Seoul, express how returning home can sometimes further dislodge an already tenuous sense of self. The video opens with a shot of the artist compulsively stuffing crackers into her mouth. This scene is followed by footage of her appearance on a Korean television program that allows people to search for people from their past (which includes adoptees searching for their biological parents), shots of archival photographs of Korean orphans, and documentation of her street performances. The video rejects the conventional documentary format in favor of fragmented scenes of antisocial behavior, failed translations, and depictions of corporeal excess. Below is a segment of dialogue that was posted on the *Losing Yourself* blog that addresses the issue of subjectivity and language. [7]

JillianH

April 22nd, 2009 at 8:55 pm

Hi Kate, I'm thinking about the commonalities and divergences in how you approach the issue of transnational identity and adoption and how they are dealt with in films such as *Daughter from Danang* and *First Person Plural*. There is something of an emotional excess or spectacle that is foregrounded in these works, primarily in the form of the weeping female body. In your work, however, emotional and corporeal excess seems to be displayed via eating and laughing. The manner in which you approach it seems aimed at provoking the feeling of displacement in the viewer/spectator. Also, is translation, via language and emotion, something you are exploring and troubling? I am thinking about moments in the film in which spoken English has English subtitles, and moments in which the viewers realizes that more than one "voice" is addressing them.

Thank you for sharing your work,
Jillian

kate hers

July 6th, 2009 at 9:38 pm

i was very pleased and excited with your responses to my work. i think directly or indirectly my work for the last several years has taken up language as a medium and intended to interrogate my position as a speaking subject. Bound up with language is of course translation, whose translation, who is being translated, and whose voice is translating. it's probably more

evident in my last work called das deutschsprachliche projekt in which i refused to speak english for 3 months and only communicated in german while living in berlin and zürich. i consider NOH-CHIM to be intimately connected to much of what i continue to engage. it's a piece which is highly personal and functions quite differently-i believe as "high art"-because of my critical investment (at least at that time) in being Korean, and so the distance needed to appreciate the work on my part took a while. i am familiar with those other filmic works about transracial adoption and while i agree that they deal with the excess of spectacle, i think those spectacles exist in exploiting a traditional narrative. i think these pieces are interesting as documentaries but my intention as artist is different and perhaps even subversive. i am more interested in a critique of my subject position, as a mirrored Other.



Noh-Chim (missing), 2005-2006, kate hers, digital video-social intervention, Seoul, Korea, © 2006

I recently asked kate hers more questions about the role of the body in her work, in particular the persona of the pregnant schoolgirl that she performed in Seoul. I interpreted this body as symbolizing her mourning for a lost Korean identity but instead hers stated that the performance was addressing the missing bodies of pregnant teens that are hidden away to avoid family shame. hers's street intervention made visible the exportation of Korean infants for adoption that is silenced in public discourse. In our exchange she shared her thoughts on using the body in her work and how it has been influenced by cultural context.

December 27, 2011

kate hers: Since I have been in Germany I have lessened the use of my own body in my work because I recognize how the racialization and codification of not only an Asian body, but an Asian female body works against a sophisticated reading or multilayered interpretation of my work. I suppose that what Kandice Chuh speaks of, what you paraphrase in your email—"the critical necessity of abandoning notions of a 'knowable' and stable ethnic 'Asian' or 'Asian American' subjectivity" is the goal, but I have unfortunately comprehended that it can only be dreamt of in a culture (perhaps not yet in Germany) in which the notion of identity of nationality, culture, race, and ethnicity (and

also gender) can be recognized simultaneously as being separate and elaborately bound together, in which positions and constellations can be made visible and discussed without being accused of racism. That being said, it's a strange situation for me to be so engaged in such ideas in my work and to not have found an audience to communicate with, to the extent I wish to in the country where I live. The fight against essentialization of identity can be misread as a rejection of one's own culture—it's so annoying. Because at the same time I don't want to represent all of Asia (-American), I don't want Asia or Asian culture to be invisible either. So I'm grappling with mediums at the moment! [8]

Although the performing body can at times trouble linguistic structures, for racialized subjects the body often reaffirms notions of otherness. Artist Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum also engages with the racialized body and transnational experience. Her video in the *Losing Yourself* exhibition, *A Short History: Starring Asme as Herself*, depicts three iterations of the artist's body interacting in a landscape of lush woods. The figures orbit around each other as they blow animated clouds of air from their mouths and receive and consume the air from one another. In the e-mail below I ask Sunstrum about the doubling and tripling of her likeness in the work.

A Short History: Starring Asme as Herself, 2007, Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum, animation (1min:36sec), Copyright Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum.

Jillian Hernandez: In *A Short History: Starring Asme as Herself* you interact with various versions of yourself and in more recent multimedia works such as *A Small(ish) Opera* you also depict yourself as multiple. What work does this doubling and tripling of the body do for your projects?

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum: I think one of the main reasons why I invented the alter ego Asme was because I needed a character who could embody an idea of the multiple self. I think in the increasingly transnational experience of many contemporary Africans, it is common to find oneself operating between cultures, traveling across several geographies, and straddling multiple social and political identities. So, in this way, the double or triple body stands in literally for those multiple selves. In my more recent work, such as *A Small(ish) Opera*, I have tried to expand the multiple self to also embody fantasy-based or mythologically-driven experiences. Lately, the multiple selves become various cosmic, cross-dimensional, or even spiritual iterations of a body.

JH: Do you think that utilizing digital media affords artists with more possibilities for challenging traditional notions of identity? If so, in what ways?

PPS: I think meaning is tied quite closely to the medium in the case of digital media. For me, using digital processes such as sound, animation, and digital photography allows me to address notions pertaining to identity in somewhat non-conventional ways. I think there is an immediacy and a certain "sharpness" to digital media that instantly conjures a current or even a futuristic moment. In my work this process is significant because it allows me a platform for honest, specific, and challenging commentary on my own experience of blackness—an experience of always shifting between definitions and boundaries; of skirting around and undercutting expectations and assumptions. [9]

Sunstrum's account of how digital media uniquely affords the articulation of the movement and shifting of identities by conjuring presentness and futurity is fruitful for thinking the multiple subject as unfixed and becoming. There is a politics to the digital. It is not just a play of identity that is facilitated by technology, but more importantly modes of communicating how gendered and racialized subjects escape and are in excess of normative structures. Methods of the digital utilized by cultural workers like Sunstrum provide alternatives to more dominant digital practices and representations generated by the mass media, gaming industry, and dominant social networking platforms that reify hierarchies of gender and race. [10]

Digital Feminist Interventions



Amber Doll, 2007, Amber Hawk Swanson, C-print, © Amber Hawk Swanson.

Discussing Amber Hawk Swanson's work in *Losing Yourself* returns us to Irigaray's notions of female multiple subjectivity and self-affection, as the artist fell in love with her double. In *The Amber Doll Project*, Swanson replicated herself by having a life-size doll made in her likeness that she placed in various public contexts in an exploration of how the female body is viewed and treated as an object, especially when it is perceived as having no agency. The artist's documentation of the public's reaction to *Amber Doll* shows how the violence and sexual abuse of the female body continues to be naturalized and culturally sanctioned in a "post-feminist," "post-equality"

context. In what follows, the artist and I discuss *The Amber Doll Project* and its evolution into her most recent work, *Tilikum*.

Jillian Hernandez: I recall you speaking about how *The Amber Doll Project* emerged from your interaction with a community of men online who use RealDolls. Can you tell me about how this online communication fed into your concept for the project?

Amber Hawk Swanson: After completing the *Feminism? Project* which involved imaging myself in provocatively sexual contexts during reenactments of a variety of women's definitions of feminism—I was lonely and seeking the companionship of a girlfriend but not yet out as queer. I read about Davecat in the *Salon.com* article "Just like a woman" and through it discovered an online forum maintained by a community of what others have termed "hetero-outsider men" who own or desire life-like sex dolls—RealDolls made of a PVC skeleton and silicone flesh and penetrable in three orifices. Aware of my own failed attempts at dating real women (termed "organics" on the forum), I felt an affinity with a subgroup of the community who described themselves as "doll husbands," and considered themselves partnered with their RealDolls. Inspired by the fulfillment they found in their relationships with what they termed "synthetics" over "organics," I ordered a RealDoll of my own.

Impossible to keep my personal relationship with my doll separate from my interest in using her as a prop, *The Amber Doll Project* became a lived-performance with two categories of output: 1.) the raw snapshots, video diaries, and correspondence that documented our falling into and out of love alongside the growing difference in our bodies as I gained weight and she remained the same. And 2.) our collaborative conceptual photographs, video vignettes, and interactive installations questioning agency and objectification. The project as a whole, and my personal experience falling into and out of love with Amber Doll, were certainly influenced by interactions with other doll owners/lovers.

JH: Instead of using a generic RealDoll, what prompted you to utilize one in your own image? What did you believe this doubling of yourself would bring to the piece?

AHS: I originally acquired Amber Doll as a prop for my work and academic interests—the fact that she also became the companion I desired in my personal life came later. The *Feminism? Project* received a degree of attention in Chicago's art world that corresponded with a compelling dialogue about the videos. In addition to the dialogue surrounding the project, I received unwanted sexual attention as a result of having imaged myself sexually and publicly. I also received a number of stories of sexual assault from both women and men who had encountered my videos. Unprepared for both, but especially the stories, I began reading about sexual assault and the compulsion to reenact trauma. I kept reading the words "victim" and "victimizer" which seemed to exist on two ends of a spectrum that described violence in the readings I was encountering. I found myself interested in the way those two words overlap. Though problematic, on a conceptual level I had the interest in merging them, and as a performer I wanted to embody them simultaneously. I was looking for two things when I ordered Amber Doll in my image, 1.) a receptacle for unwanted sexual attention, and 2.) a realistic body double that allows me to embody victim/victimizer simultaneously. Looking back, I'm still a little unclear about all of the meanings I was pursuing in the work. Much of it was led by intuition and has only now come into clearer focus with my new work transforming Amber Doll's severely damaged body into a small replica of the bull orca, *Tilikum*, who lives in captivity at SeaWorld Orlando and has been involved in the deaths of three people.



Amber Doll > Tilikum, 2011, Amber Hawk Swanson, C-print, © Amber Hawk Swanson.

JH: I am fascinated with your *Tilikum* project, especially the way in which a "damaged" female body transforms into an animal body, one that is in captivity and exploited. In other words, both bodies treated as objects in different ways. Are you trying to articulate this parallel in the project? What prompted you to make a whale body *Amber Doll*'s new incarnation?

AHS: In 2010 when *Tilikum* killed a trainer at SeaWorld I paid attention to the way the incident was represented in the media. It seemed *Tilikum* was both easy to sympathize with as a captive and easy to blame as a violent killer. I began reading about ambiguous perpetrators and provocative victims and something clicked between my previous work with *Amber Doll* and the ways in which I was understanding our societal response to *Tilikum*. People close to my art practice have described the new *Amber Doll > Tilikum* work as a way for *Amber Doll* to bite back after the abuse she endured over the course of our earlier work together. I think this is absolutely part of the work, as is the parallel between *Amber Doll*'s damaged female body and *Tilikum*'s captive and exploited body. Additionally, I've had artistic interests in acts perceived as revenge and moments when the subject of our sympathy flips unexpectedly. Lately, I've been interested in hearing how *Tilikum*'s former trainers-turned activists interpret the work. I was delighted when former Sea World trainers got in touch with me during the recent transformation. Their ideas about the work incorporate new perspectives based on their experiences at SeaWorld and in a community of marine mammal activists. Some of their thoughts are included in our Livestreamed conversation during the performance. [11]



Amber Doll > Tilikum, 2011, Amber Hawk Swanson, C-print, © Amber Hawk Swanson.

The evolution of *The Amber Doll Project*, which connected a queer woman artist exploring feminism with hetero-outsider men, and resulted in digital marine mammal activism, demonstrates the political potential of new media art practice. This evolution was sparked, like many of the other *Losing Yourself* projects, by the artist's attempts at self-affection, at utilizing multiple voices and selves to engage the vicissitudes of gendered subjectivity. We have explored not only the positive aspects of plural subjectivity's challenge to phallocentric notions of self and gender, but also the physical and emotional ordeals that addressing these multiple subjects entails. The work of the artists in *Losing Yourself in the 21st Century* present us with female bodies we can see but never know—there are too many to keep track of and it is impossible to determine which one of them is real. The multiplied female subject unhinges our hold on self/knowledge, making identity a medium for transformation and becoming.

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In Search of a www.analogfeminism.net: Starting with Three Contrarian Concepts via Mother-Daughter Machines to Come

Kyoo Lee

analogue, *n.* and *adj.*

Forms: 18- **analog** (chiefly *U.S.*), 18- **analogue**.

Etymology: < French *analogue* thing that has characteristics in common with another thing (1787), person who resembles another (mid 19th cent.) and its etymon ancient Greek ἀνάλογον *analogon* *n.*

Compare earlier *analogate* *n.*, *analagon* *n.*

In sense B. 1a arising from the use of some sort of analogy or analogue in the calculating device

(compare e.g. *quots.* 1941² 1960 for *analog computer* *n.* at Special uses).

In sense B. 1e arising from the representation of the original signal by an analogously varying physical quantity.

In technical uses as adjective normally opposed to uses of digital *adj.*

(OED)

digital, *n.* and *adj.*

Forms: 1ME **digitalle**, 1ME 16- **digital**.

Etymology: < classical Latin *digitālis* measuring a finger's breadth, in post-classical Latin also of or relating to the finger (8th cent. in a British source) (OED)

Looking sideways,
our analog feminist looks distracted,
yet read on; start by focusing on her.



Fig. 1. Untitled Film Still #53, 1980, Cindy Sherman, © Tate Britain

1. Analog feminism is the flip – not the opposite – side of digital feminism.

Analog feminism (AF) and digital feminism (DF) are two sides of the same coin; or, multiple twin sisters joined at the hip. Whatever the case, we, or at least one of us, are here to focus on and fly with what's left uncoordinated in-and connecting-all that's (to be) digit-alled in the evolving idioms of feminist discourses. We care to see, or at least to try to attend to, that which persists, that which demands, in each case, our attention as the messier, elastic, micro-organismic dimension of feminist spirit that remains figuratively and materially tied to-while seemingly slipping from-the extensively discrete unit, however tiny, frame, segment, sequence, grip, control, of all sorts such as categories, paradigms, algorithms, loops, logics, languages, laws, histories, geopolitical borders, discursive boundaries, representational devices, event-generating regulatory apparatuses as (seen on) TV, etc.-you name it, you know it when you cross it. Ready to evaporate at any moment, like that grin of the Cheshire Cat's, AF is shuttling between zeros and (minus/plus) ones at this very moment, wildly and widely:

In terms of the pragmatic roles they play, the zeros and ones of machine code do far more than hark back to the binaries their logical symbols represent. If zero is supposed to signify a hole, a space, or a missing piece, and one is the sign of positivity, digital machines turn these binaries around. In both electronic systems and the punched cards of weaving machines, a hole is one, and a blank is zero, in which case there are two missing elements, if missing is where either can be said to go. [\[1\]](#)

True, at least at this stage in ongoing techno-revolutions that constantly update and reprogram the pulses and streams of the world, what is inevitably lacking in digital machines, mini- or mega-, that could recognize both yes and no, whichever way your finger might "go," but can only register yes or no, just one at a time, seems just that: what they don't have-or perhaps won't?-is a diagonal capacity to "go" out of sequence, to go gray between zeroes and ones, which is where life is lodged, where breathing happens, multi-directionally, each time anew. No matter how you feel, now, inseparably tied to or already tired of that Siri-woman-thingy on that once "new" iPhone 4S, it is after all your "command," however mistaken, that the she-machine is "following," again, however mistakenly; in this increasingly touchy simulation of dual control or zero-ing-in that goes really virtual, she is, when on, waiting for you to say something, regardless of whatever unprintable "shit" [\[2\]](#) she might have to say "in response."

If and when, turning around a corner, I "am no more than an episodic voice, a speech without contour" [\[3\]](#), as Maurice Blanchot quips while musing "On a Change of Epoch," such a stabilizing neutrality of the narrative "I" is not without its ontological vibrancy, revolutionary deviancy even, which can only be dormant rather than straightforwardly absent; any transitory e-motions could vibrate thusly, derivatively. Am I the only one who senses a certain imperative here? I suggest we read this malleable, wayward "episodic voice" in us, inaugurally. With no particular vision to pursue or agenda to push, I still see a certain contrarian allegory of digital cuts at work, bubbling up; how the guillotine accentuates a sense of life; how pruning keeps trees growing; how the last turns into the first, etc. Yielding to the guiding and disorienting forces of fragments, those zillion unshapely or even over-processed "bits and pieces" that infrastructure the "digital" turn, could be liberating no matter what, even and especially for those self-knowing souls seeking to write themselves into a world which they would also have to destroy masterfully.

A moral of the story? Keep connecting, following, and undoing whatever dots that may appear on the horizon, without losing a thread that may remain blurry at any point. Just as the world writes itself out via a series of displaced 'Is,' as noted by Jacques Derrida, AF is (to be) found or locatable, however elusively, in what's "saved and lost at once" in DF:

When one writes, one is always trying to outsmart the worst. Perhaps so as to prevent it from taking everything away, but the last word, you know, always belongs to non-mastery, for both the reader and oneself. And it's good that this is the way it is. The living desire to write keeps you in relation to a terror that you try to maneuver with even as you leave it intact, audible in that place [...]. [4]

So, what am I—or what is Siri, if still here—trying to say? AF, as those countless, unfurling, bleeding archives of feminism on the move, is what (test-)drives [5] DF-crazy?

This cannot be a manifesto [6]. Having nothing to show, AF cannot be something (more definite or programmatic) like a counter-manifesto, either, a "manifesto for a 'return to "old-style feminist politics,'" [7] for instance, the sort of politics that deals with "real" problems such as those still found in "India" where, as Professor Martha Nussbaum reports, "academic feminists have thrown themselves into practical struggles." [8] However, as practical struggles are really, indeed, ubiquitous and becoming ever so infinitesimally global across spacetime, from a boardroom in New York City today or the bedroom of Penelope in Ithaca in ancient Greece, any acts of thinking through geneses, structures and patterns of such injustices, malpractices, and errors would be part of such struggles.

So again, nothing new in itself, not even old-fashioned or scholastic, AF functions quite simply as a sort of mobile tag, an "umbrella" term, for feminist repositories of recyclable ideas or resources for renewable feminist energy. As such, AF, both in itself and for itself, remains old and "dirty," as originally disordered and disidentitarian as "humus," the earth from which humanity sprouts;:

There are holy grounds; the earth rejoices; Adam is of *adamah*, humanity from "humus." [...] What is intriguing is that "radical disorder is the key to the functions of humus." At "the molecular level, it may indeed be the most disordered material on Earth," exhibiting fractal self-similarity with no self-sameness. [9]

Not only that, we should add, AF is as (extra-)ordinary as an apple pie, just as that housewifery figure photographed in "apparently solitary, unguarded moments of reflection [...]" or in conversation with somebody off-set and outside of the frame" [10]. A Betty Friedan might come into view here, still with "the problem that has no name" [11]. AF is then, let's say, what grounds, undergirds, overrides DF—not necessarily in all-embracing and ever-harmonizing mother-earthly ways as if she could even never shrug, but more cuttingly, precisely, rhythmically like the coolly warming hand of a nurse, a cook, a typist, even a Provost, that keeps everyone somehow rightly spaced—or just slightly spaced out—across the board ever so dexterously.

AF alters DF anchoringly by giving it "its birthmarks" which prefigures its dead mask. Meet Hélène Cixous' (virgin) mother, Eve "here (Eve y est)," as old as the Bible and the kitchen sink (*l'évier*):

The words are a gift. Written in the unforgettable language of life. Inscribed in a foreign tongue so foreign that it recalls the infinite intimacy of life, the mother gives the daughter a gift of writing which comes from the other: the other's life, the other life. And signs it, in life. And then the writer

countersigns it, otherwise, with her given name: "Hélène Cixous." [12]

"The infinite intimacy of life" is the subterranean space between a sign and a countersign kept tight, and tightly played out, by that another sign given away by an an-economy; the analogue economy of life-giving unfolds through and flows over the dialectical economy of the Trinity [13]. I live, and there in, I live on-or will have lived-by whatever last name that inhabits and inhibits me. Perhaps that, that other name, that "sur-name" [14] *Khora*, for instance, is what sustains and survives the mother-daughter company, un-Limited Inc. What matrix of sign-ifications yet to emerge! Such is, I should now say, "the self feminists must code" [15], as a cyborg mother machine already suggested almost a generation ago with a finger pointing back, inevitably, to a Descartes-in drag?

The Presence of this "Cartesian gene" in the plant,
rooted precisely where the human lost to the machine,
reveals the tenuous border between humanity,
inanimate objects endowed with lifelike qualities,
and living organisms that encode digital information. [16]

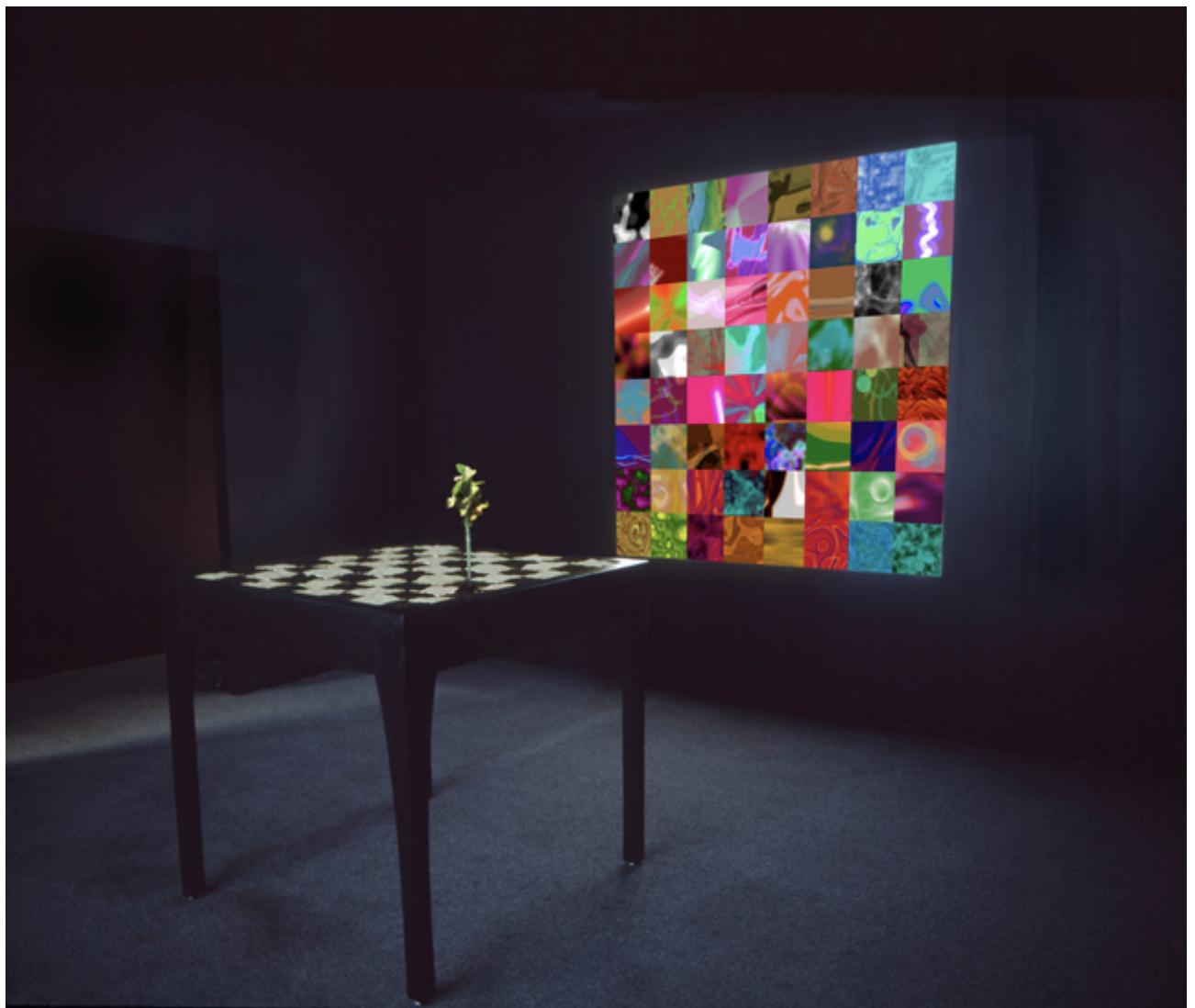


Fig. 2. *Move 36*, 2002/04 (detail), Eduardo Kac, transgenic work with artist-created plant and digital video, dimensions variable, edition of 3 © Collection Alfredo Hertzog da Silva, São Paulo.

2. Departing from databases, AF digs into the motherboard, menstrual languages of feminism.

Alert to analytic mistakes, categorical in particular, AF, often intent on making a point, is still rather unhesitant to draw on analogies, allegories, and anecdotes to suck you in, into its confabulatory fields of thought-action including identity-fabrication. Just to ease you into this mini-series of derivative pontifications here, I would like to read with you this quite extraordinary, opening passage by Kaja Silverman on *Flesh of My Flesh*:

Sometimes all that it takes to get the war machine up and running is a whiff of likeness. [...] We also relate to ourselves analogically. We do not have an "identity" because we are constantly changing, but we also do not break into a million pieces because each of our "shapes" resembles the others. [17]

Quite right, is it not? Also, associative pondering and plotting is, quite literally, a hallmark of analog(ical) feminists who would also, occasionally, mobilize Platonic parallels as the hermeneutic guardrail especially in consideration for those otherwise unable to get "there" or "it." Christian allegories, analogies, and parables that instruct while delighting the (non-)readers and (non-)believers, any particular scenes of which we need not detail here, are prime examples. Truth be told further, however, the use made of Platonic rationalism by AF is more eccentric than heuristic, a little unruly: it dwells not only on, but in the Platonic cave, where they are capable of lubricating themselves.

Somewhere there is a siren. [...] Sometimes she begins to sing. The women say that of her song nothing is to be heard but a continuous O. that is why this song evokes for them, like everything that recalls the O, the zero or the circle, the vulval ring. [18]

Ms. COgit0—if not or along with “Mr. Cogito” [19]—who reaches, and registers back, that 0/0-degree thinking via some queerly different routes and ruses, would navigate the world a little differently. Rather than charting the water and clearing the land by using “dryware” [20] along the way, (s)he becomes the “bloody” map itself, itself then set in motion, pluralized, intensified, with its multiple neurological complexities spectrally singularized. Is that not how Simone de Beauvoir, for instance, translates the universal modernity and modern absenteeism of *cogito, sum?* What am I then *becoming* or what have I *been*?—*The Second Sex*. What do I think I am?—I am the becoming-woman of an “I” that thinks (a thought (of a woman)); not who, but still a woman à la Aristotle, like his womb.

Note the irreducible embedded-ness of material inscriptions that transforms, by tactile animation, the very figures of thoughts, the “bloody” animal machine, the machine fed by that special nectar, blood, that allegedly only God can first give, which one passes on by second donation, generation after generation. It was, after all, such a figure of the biblically “creative” divinity that Descartes, at the end of the series of otherworldly meditations, sought to reinstall firmly and restore summarily, at least on paper; “Unnerved by his own heterogeneity, Descartes abandoned his claim to be the origin of his thoughts and restored God to that position.” [21] Silverman is spot-on there, on the radical internal discontinuities between ‘Descartes’ and Cartesian voices. That point at which such a Cartesian U-turn or chiasmus (X) is about to take place, that knotty co-origination of being and becoming is, as I envisage – as a little bit of a Cartesian addict myself, I will say that – precisely where analogue feminists dwell while thinking (through) their bloody, persistent, thoughts: they would have to be left wondering where such ‘God’ or ‘Being’ comes from or how She-He-or-It comes if at all. Such interstitially transitional, and transitorily inscriptive, moves that form and foster feminist undercurrents in philosophical traditions still dominated by economized

monolingualism, did and will continue to flip open and render visible various "processes of parallel emergence, non causal connections and simultaneous developments which suggest that sexual relations continually shift in sympathy with changes to the ways many other aspects of the world work. [...]" ; "and," as Sadie Plant goes on to note, "by the 1970s, when Luce Irigaray wrote *This Sex which is not One*, fluid complexities were giving a world which had once revolved around ones and others a dynamic which obsolesced the possibility of being one of anything at all" [22].

Quickly sketched so far, just as a starting point, is also an allegorical passion with which analog feminists including a certain less clear--gender-being/switching--Descartes in the background, would commit themselves to theoretical anachronism or even anachronistic rationalism, save itself, i.e., for the sake of its-self, to save itself from itself. Such is also how I savor the archaic materiality, surreality and futurity of the language of AF, including its richly choral, polyvalent linguisticity. Unafraid to bleed at least a little in order to survive itself, AF speaks the language of not just fluidity but more specifically menstruality, the gendered limits of abstraction. Such is also how Julie Kristeva on the cyclicalities of women's time and Gayatri Spivak on the temporal precision of subaltern women's silence, too, for instance, could be read together, alongside the work of Irigaray, without their analog singularities being digitally conflated or camouflaged.

How does the feminist blood flow? And how is it to be kept flowing? Constellations, not just computations, and not simply keywords, but keys to words that matter even beyond measure: molding theories out of stories of various scales and sorts, "embracing an infinity of great and small" [23], analog feminists would operate as the irreducible readers and invisible architects of the evident, who could mobilize their serial distractedness and interlingual imaginations, against the relentlessly binarized "informatics of domination" [24], the "scary new networks" [25] of significations in this post-industrial, global technocratic capitalism; if no longer "new," does it not remain increasingly invasive and pervasive? Feminist reading in the age of instant digitality and "real-time" virtuality should then aim to d@ive right back into data, almost immediately, again for its own sake, to "save and lose" itself at once. For "when a digital image disappears, it decays into the "dust" of numerical data. The data could of course be used to create a computationally identical image, but that image would still be new" [26], something new in all things that were not. AF names and sustains such creative practices of anachronistic reading, multi-mediated and platformed assemblages of critically self-reflexive practices that fold themselves into and out of the very legacy of critical reading.

Through the looking-glass, and what AF found there:
A panorama of silhouette, cutting cries from the past:



Fig. 3. *Slavery! Slavery!*, 1997, Cut paper on wall, 11 x 85 feet, Courtesy of the artist and Sikkema Jenkins & Co.

3. The mother of inventions being the mother, the daughter needs to invent still, if only otherwise.

Cut from the mother, the daughter, like her mother, does and must and will “lose her mother” [27] who becomes “collage (that) precisely references the spaces in between and refuses to respect the boundaries that usually delineate self from other, art object from museum, and the copy from the original” [28]. Referential refusal at work, figures arise still, dancingly, to knotty scenes of encounter. Here’s a pair of cutting ironies, an unsettling duet of irreverence, not to be confused with irrelevance: lose your mother, and the mother will not be lost; use your mother, and the mother will not be used:

Using art as bait and deploying the female body in particular as a site for the negative projection of racial and colonial fantasy is simply a modern technology. But using the same technology to turn racism and sexism back upon themselves like a funhouse mirror is a part of what I am calling feminist negation. [29]

“Shadow feminisms,” vividly illustrated by those stirring surfaces of Kara Walker’s cutouts, and provocatively advanced by Judith Jack Halberstam, to both of which AF is chorally connectible, “take the form not of becoming, being, and doing but of shady, murky modes of undoing, unbecoming, and violating” [30]. Willingly non-normative, non-conforming and non-assimilated, these otherwise mobilized political gestures and negative identities are invaluable illuminating in the present context, too, of a “contrarian” search for digitalized analog feminism. For the kind of digitally-infrastructure, analog-infrared feminism being conceived here still relies on a certain silhouette of the thinker-reader uncannily coded and cast in post-Cartesian phenomenological idioms of alterities of selfhood: how deep is—can be—a flat refusal of the now, not then or later, and indeed the repetition of such “inappropriate” countermoves? Or how extensive is our, my, anyone’s complicity with the reflexive formation of feminist discourses? The

question is: what is not to be repeated when a repetition does and must and will take place, given this “de-propriating force of repetition that is the ground of possibility of meaning?” [31] To ask the same à la Betty-Friedan-look-alike appearing back at the beginning and in the future, which triggered this doughnut-thought around AF in the first place: what should be scrutinized, when feminists do and must and will also focus elsewhere? By “unnestling” the inaugural spirit of shadow feminisms from the usual “Anglo-American” language of ideologized positivism, political sociality and utopian hyper-modernity, what Halberstam aims to do is to contribute to discontinuing—not uploading or downloading—that line of doing, thinking, acting, being ... you name it, you see it, when you sense it. Halberstam’s move is to discredit the departmentalized, “racialized and sexualized,” “ugly legacy of Oedipal models of generationality” that institutional feminism has inherited while purportedly questioning it; true and fair enough, if “the whole model of “passing down” knowledge from mother to daughter is quite clearly invested in white, gendered, and heteronormativity,” [32] the next move would be to figure out how to depart from there. Again, that tough question, almost like a stain, of “the informatics of domination” returns, resurfaces, the issue being how, where and when to “delete” it; whether it is possible to cut it, to cut it not just down or up but away, completely away.

Up and down, left and right ... cut and paste, here and there, the head of this analog feminist still feels like some scrambled eggs, for she still needs to slice—if not exactly cut—her way through some elective affinities she senses towards the ethico-political orientation of “shadow feminisms” among others, as noted in passing. Why, and whither, this almost absolutized—digitally re-mastered?—black-or-white dissociation and disavowal? Why not allow those heavily mythopoeticized and overcoded mothers to reemerge in some trans-categorical or trans-paradigmatic ways?—in translations, for instance, of that hardly guardable, foreign “mother” tongue, in and of which Elissa Marder, for instance, speaks with exemplarity complexity and fluency without fetishizing or abjecting it but rather just animating it [33]; note how she has the reproductive logic of the mother machine materialize through various figures of the mother she digs into or through. What about, that is to ask, the musical singularity of maternal gifts and idioms of feminist discourses? Shadow feminists can play, too, or can’t they? A shadow play, perhaps: a kind that is “much more than a kind of willful play for power within the discursive field loosely called ‘theory’?” [34] Or is the constitutive deconstructiveness, objective transitoriness, of it all too gray, all too humanly gray? *Homo Ludens* on the move remains a gray matter, with or without a feminist hat on it.

... to be continued @ www.analogfeminism.net

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SOL MORÉN

(THEORY) is a Swedish digital artist and senior lecturer at Umeå University. Her interest is in questions concerning how gender norms may affect creative use of new technology. Morén could be considered one of the female pioneers of digital art in the north of Sweden. At the Academy of Fine Arts, in the 1990s, she was one of the first to transition from analogue photo and video processing into the digital world that was just opening up. This led to a position as an artistic researcher at the Interactive Institute in Umeå in the 2000s. Morén is currently employed at the Department of Creative Studies, doing artistic research and development within the field of ICT.

OCCUPY WALL STREET

(UNIVERSITIES IN QUESTION-MANIFESTOS) Emphasizing direct action and consensus-based leadership, Occupy Wall Street is a coalition of individuals fighting to limit the political power of corporations, curtail corporate malfeasance, address structural inequalities, and challenge the structures of power that organize society along hierarchical lines. Although the movement's epicenter is in New York City, Occupy movements have sprung up in cities and spaces across the globe.

TINA ORLANDINI

(UNIVERSITIES IN QUESTION-smartAction) Tina is a writer, cultural worker and human rights advocate. She has a BA in art history and writing, and recently earned her MA in arts politics with a concentration in curatorial practice from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. She is currently the Green Light District Arts & Communications Specialist for Brooklyn community-based organization, El Puente and is a Research Assistant for the arts consulting practice, Webb Management Services, Inc. Tina currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

VLADIMIR PÉREZ

(UNIVERSITIES IN QUESTION-MANIFESTOS) (1992) Vladimir's interest and impetus for rhyme and self-expression eventually led to Rap and Spoken-Word. He considers "Estoy de regreso" (2010; 17 years old) to be his first track that embodies his actual characteristic/particular style. Discovering the hip-hop scene in Puerto Rico and participating in the student movement within the University of Puerto Rico (and what all of this implied) created the context that opened the doors to hip-hop as a means to encourage social conscience and change. He participated in El Colectivo, with whom he released the mixtape El Colectivo Vol. 1 (2012). He is currently working on his first EP as a solo artist: "Musas y Vías."

PRABA PILAR

(THEORY) is a Bay Area/Colombian performance artist, technologist, and cultural theorist exploring the intersections of emerging technologies, economics, and the environment through performances, installations, street theatre, writing, and digital works. Her wildly diverse work has been presented nationally and internationally at museums, galleries, universities, performance festivals, public streets, and radio airwaves. She has been written about in numerous publications, and honored with multiple awards, including the Creative Capital and the Creative Work Fund. She is currently a PhD Candidate in Performance Studies at the University of California, Davis, and can be visited online at www.prabapilar.com.

ERIKA P. RODRÍGUEZ

(UNIVERSITIES IN QUESTION-smartAction) Erika is a Puerto Rican photographer and multimedia journalist. She recently obtained her Bachelor of Science in Visual Journalism at Brooks Institute where she discovered that her documentary approach requires her to immerse herself deeply within the stories she captures. She has received both a silver award and an award of excellence in the portrait category from College Photographer of the Year. Her work has been published in El Nuevo Día and Primera Hora in Puerto Rico, and Coastal View News and Ojai Quarterly in California. "My hope is that the audience is able to see themselves, in the simplest human context, in the images and is able to reflect about what we are as a community."

SILVIA RUZANKA

(THEORY - "Digital Feminisms" issue editor and contributor) is an American media artist whose projects include video, installation, performance, and virtual environments. Her work is concerned with the archaeology and memory of technology and media, and their intersections with everyday life. She has presented her artwork and research at numerous galleries, museums, and international festivals. Ruzanka holds an MFA in Art and Technology from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She currently lives and works near Albany, New York, and teaches digital art and animation at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

GRANT TAYLOR

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ELSA MARÍA MELÉNDEZ TORRES

(UNIVERSITIES IN QUESTION-smartAction) (Caguas, Puerto Rico)

Elsa María has studied printmaking, drawing, painting, curation and museology at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Puerto Rico, in the Smithsonian Affiliations and the Smithsonian Center for Education Museum Studies, Washington, D.C., at the Museum and Center for Humanistic Studies at the University of Turabo and the Museum of History, Anthropology and Art at the University of Puerto Rico. Elsa María is the cofounder of espacio Metro: plataformaorganizada in Hato Rey, founded in 2011. Since 1998 she has worked at the Caguas Art Museum. Internationally, Elsa María's work has exhibited in collectives in the United States, Uruguay, Cuba,

Dominican Republic, Ireland, Romania and Portugal. Recent awards include the Puerto Rican Fund for the Financing of Cultural Affairs of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, 2011. In 2009 she was awarded the Lexus with the Arts Scholarship, a project she installed in 2010 at the Museum of Art of Puerto Rico. Elsa Maria's work is represented in the collection of the Ponce Art Museum, Museum of History, Anthropology and Art of the UPR; Caguas Art Museum, Puerto Rico; Collection of Arts, Library José M. Lazaro, UPR; International Experimental Print Biennale, Romania; Lolita Rubial Foundation, Minas, Uruguay and Haydee Santamaria Collection Art of the Americas, Havana, Cuba.

UNIVERSITY LIBERATION FRONT

(UNIVERSITIES IN QUESTION-MANIFESTOS) The University Liberation Front is a coalition of graduate students, teaching assistants and low-level instructors committed to realizing the radical possibilities of the public university by creating spaces for critical education within their classrooms. A product of struggles against the privatization of the public university, campus racism, and labor exploitation, they remain a continuous and strategically disruptive presence within an ostensibly "public" university that regards its students as revenue streams.

NGOC-TRAN VU

(Editorial Videographer) was born in Saigon, Vietnam and moved to the United States with her family when she was four years old. She grew up in Dorchester & South Boston and was politicized by the diverse yet segregated working class neighborhoods of Boston, Massachusetts. She graduated from Brown University in 2010 with a double concentration in Ethnic Studies and Visual Arts and recently completed the M.A. in Arts Politics at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. As a visual artist, activist, educator and scholar, Tran has always been passionate about the arts and using its tools to express a progressive consciousness as well as to connect people and communities together.

YaniRoca

(UNIVERSITIES IN QUESTION-smartAction)

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(Universities in Question) is Dean and Professor in the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at the University of Washington Bothell. He is the President of the Cultural Studies Association, the Chair of the National Advisory Board of Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life, and the co-director with Miriam Bartha of the UW's graduate Certificate in Public Scholarship. He is the author of *Sentimental Bodies: Sex, Gender, and Citizenship in the Early Republic*, and co-editor of *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (with Glenn Hender). He is currently working on a co-edited collection, *New Formations of Cultural Studies: Collaboration, Practice, Research*, and completing a book project entitled *Sex, Panic, Nation*. He has taught, researched, and published widely in the fields of American studies, cultural studies, and queer studies. He serves on the editorial and advisory boards of *American Quarterly* and *American Literary History*, and the press committee of the University of Washington Press. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of Humanities Washington.

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JAMIE "SKYE" BIANCO

(Design Editor/Lead Developer) is an activist eduMaker (and Assistant Professor of Digital Media at the University of Pittsburgh). Most recently she has published, "This Digital Humanities That Is Not One" in *Debates in Digital Humanities* (U Minn, 2012) and *Dogwalking in Cemetery Woods in Enculturation*. She has been chosen for inclusion in the 2013 Carnegie Museum

of Art International exhibition and catalogue for her video series, AffectEyes (Machining Affect: Seeing More than [Human] Eyes Can See. Her sound work on method, #designed_affections, appeared in Fembot: Feminism, New Media, Science and Technology and a pedagogical iteration of the large-scale media project, #inhabitation: the foreclosed remains of living, appeared in the inaugural issue of CCC Online. Other work appears in FibreCulture ("Composing, Compositing, and New Media: Integrated Digital Writing and Academic Pedagogy"), Women's Studies Quarterly ("Social Networking and Cloud Computing: Precarious Affordances for the 'Prosumer'"), The Affective Turn (Duke UP), Rhizome, and Comparative Literature Studies. Forthcoming publications include: #bottlesNbones #7 & hurricanes remain (a video and algoRhythmic text) in the inaugural issue of O-zone: A Journal of Object-Oriented Studies and "Petro-Agentessimal: Plastic Media Intervention" in The Petroleum Manga [featuring the artwork of Marina Zurkow], (Punctum Books). Find her at spikenlilli.com

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